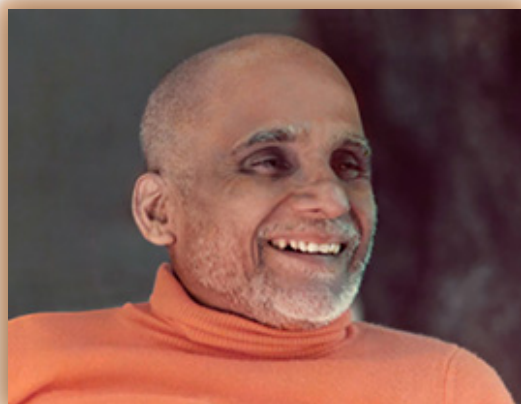
ESSAYS ON THE UPANISHADS

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CONTENTS

ISAVASYOPANISHAD

Santi Mantra

That is full; this is full. From the full the full proceeds. Taking the full from the full, the full alone remains. That Absolute is full. This created being is also full. Brahman is infinitude and is therefore full. That which proceeds from the full or the infinite must be either real or unreal. If it is real, it must also be full, because a part cannot be ever-enduring, and that which is not always enduring is not real. If it is unreal, nothing proceeds at all. This means to say that either infinity is the product of infinity or nothing proceeds from infinity. Infinity cannot proceed from infinity, because, thereby, there would be two infinities. Hence, the proceeding of infinity from infinity does not change infinity, because infinity alone remains even after that. The drift of the statement is that infinity is unchanging and this *mantra* is a figurative way of saying that nothing proceeds from infinity. Even the idea of something proceeding from infinity is based on its essential character of infinity. That which is produced, namely, Hiranyagarbha, or the universe, must be infinite. Otherwise there should be something outside Hiranyagarbha, or the universe. The universe includes space, also, and beyond space there is nothing. Therefore, the universe is infinite. Even the individual that is created is essentially infinite. Taking infinity from infinity is only an idea and not a possibility. Therefore, the infinite alone exists without change in past, present and future. *Om Santih*, *Santih*,

Santih - May the three *taapas* (afflictions) cease, and may there be peace.

Note:

The three *taapas* are: Subjective trouble, objective trouble and heavenly trouble.

Subjective trouble: Hunger, thirst, grief, delusion, ignorance, disease and death.

Objective trouble: Ferocious animals, poisonous creatures and wicked human beings.

Heavenly trouble: Thunderbolt, storms, floods, heat, cold, earthquake, etc.

Introductory

The nature of the Self is not in any way connected with the processes or the results of action that takes the Self to be limited, impure and diverse. Knowledge pertains to the essential nature of the Self. Knowledge neither creates nor modifies nor obtains nor purifies the Self, because the relationship between knowledge and the Self is not one of doer and doing. All the Upanishads exhaust themselves in ascertaining the fundamental characteristics of the Self. The *mantras* of the Isavasyopanishad negate the conception which the Mimamsakas have of the Self, and assert that the true Self is secondless, non-doer, non-enjoyer, pure and ever untainted by sin.

Mantra 1

All this is pervaded by the Lord, whatever is moving (and not moving) in this world. By such renunciation enjoy (or protect). Do not covet the wealth of anyone. *Vasyam* or *avasyam* means fit to be dwelt by or clothed by or covered

over by. The universe is to be covered over by the consciousness of God. It means that God indwells every being of the universe. But this indwelling does not in any way create a distinction between the indweller and the indwelled. The Lord exists as the innermost Self of all. The Self, however, cannot pervade itself. Pervasion, here, means existence. The universe in essence is the truth of God Himself. It does not exist as an object to be covered over by God, like cloth, etc. There is nothing in this universe which can have any value or being without the existence of God. This is to say that God is the sole existence.

It also means that one has to fill the whole universe with the consciousness of Divinity. Divinity should be felt as the *pratyag*Atman or the Inner Self of oneself. This is a clue to meditation on Brahman, also. One should assert that the whole existence is, in its objective form, unreal and that oneself in fact is the essential Atman existing as the basis and the truth of everything. This is to assert that one's Self is the Supreme Lord, not merely pervading everything, but existing as the only reality.

Even as a scented stick begins to give out its fragrance when the external fungus growing over it is rubbed out, the light of the Self reveals itself when the external crust of the sense of doership and enjoyership which is falsely imagined is completely erased out. The multiplicity and the duality of the universe should be denied in the light of the fact that the Lord, the one Self, alone exists. This omnipresent Self cannot be associated with individual functions, like doership and enjoyership. Name, form and action which characterise the world cannot be the natures of God,

because these are objective perceptions and not eternal values. The universe, thus, gets renounced, because God is the only Truth. *Tena tyaktena* means "by such renunciation" consequent upon the knowledge of the only existence which is God. Renunciation is the result of the knowledge of Truth. Anything that is abandoned as unconnected with the Self does not become useful to the Self in any way. Everyone in the world is dependent on the not-Self. But when the not-Self is denied one cannot be dependent on it. The denial of the not-Self or the renunciation of the universe means that the Self is not helped by any external agency and it has to save itself through itself. It also means that previous to knowledge, i.e., when the Self appeared to be entangled in the not-self, it was in bondage, as it were, but now because of disentanglement it saves itself and protects itself and is dependent on itself. Because the Self is permanent its independence also is permanent. *Bhunjeetbhah* may also mean "enjoy", in which case the sense would be that through the renunciation of the not-Self there accrues to the Self the highest enjoyment, everything becomes its, and it experiences the Bliss of Liberation. It is a law that the greater the renunciation, the greater is the joy experienced because of the absence of desires. "Do not covet the wealth of anyone" means that, because God is the only reality, there is nothing worth coveting in this world. Because, "whose is wealth"? The wealth does not belong to anyone. All possessions are perishable. Therefore, there is no need of coveting anything. Only the knowledge that the Self is all, the Lord of all, should be acquired and everything else

should be renounced. Everything is the Atman and, hence, there is no value in desiring anything. As other than the Atman nothing is, nothing can be desired or loved. *Dhanam* may also mean the dearest possession, which is one's own body. In this case the meaning would be: Do not covet any kind of body, not even a celestial body or even the body of the creator himself. Do not wish to be reborn in any kind of body, and aspire for liberation alone.

Mantra 2

The first *mantra* refers to *jnana-nishtha*, and is meant for those who have the ability to abandon all desires and establish themselves in knowledge alone. But on others who are not yet ready for such a state the performance of action in conformity with the natural inclination of the individual is enjoined: "By doing action alone here one should wish to live a hundred years. Thus it is in your case; there is no other way than this. Action dose not cling to man." One can wish to live as an individual only by performing actions. As long as there is the strong feeling that on is a human being alone, the laws pertaining to the human being have to be observed. One cannot live in one plane and observe the rules of another plane. The notion of one's being an individual is inseparably connected with the ideas of and the necessity for desire and action. The very fact of individuality denotes that individuality is not complete and one can never rest with peace in an incomplete condition. There is an involuntary urge from within to strive to become perfect. The individual, however, thinks that perfection consists in the acquisition of what is not already

possessed. Moreover, the feeling of the need for certain external acquisitions is based on a special want felt within, though this want may change its nature from time to time. Every want manifests itself as an action and goads the body to move towards what is wanted. Even breathing and thinking are the implications of the necessity to exist as an individual ever striving in nature. There seems to be no other way of living as an individual than by the performance of action. If one refuses to perform action one shall be forced to perform action by the law of individual life. Instead of yielding to involuntary urges for action it is advisable to perform action consciously with good determinations, without a desire for selfish enjoyments, and with a knowledge of the law of action and reaction.

Shankara discusses the nature of action and knowledge and their relation between one another. Knowledge as Shankara understands it is not the knowledge that the human being is familiar with. The knowledge of the human being is knowledge of something other than the knower. It is always knowledge of some object or objects. It is divided knowledge that separates the object from the subject. It is incomplete knowledge, for, by it, it is not possible to know the subject and the object at one and the same time. When the one is known, the other is discarded and forgotten. It is not possible to have whole knowledge through a process, and perception or human knowledge is evidently a process. Process means change, and change is movement towards some thing or some state which marks the process as distinct from perfection. Hence, human knowledge is a perishable process of an ever non-enduring struggle for

perfection. A struggle is not the same as an achievement, and truly speaking, human knowledge never achieves anything, substantially. The knowing faculty knows an object only as it wants to know it and as it is capable of knowing it, and not as the object is really in itself. The form and the nature of objects are determined by the form and the nature of the conceptual modifications of the faculty of knowing. Thus human knowledge is simply coating an existing object the true nature of which is never known. The knowledge of an individual is simply artificial. This is not the knowledge that Shankara is speaking of when he distinguishes it from action. Human knowledge is an action alone, because it is produced by the motion of the mind and the senses. The knowledge propounded in the Advaita Vedanta is objectless knowledge, and it is never produced but realised. It is not the knowledge of something but the knowledge of the knower himself. It is *atma-sakshatkara* that Shankara means by knowledge when he says that action is the antithesis of knowledge.

Action is generally an effort towards the achievement of an end. Man does not simply exist. He ever tries to become something else. He is never satisfied with simply existing. He wishes to change, to become. The impulse for action is ingrained in the very constitution of the individual. Action has become an indispensable part of the individual self. Action cannot be cast off, because it is not separate from the form of the make-up of the individual. The whole life of man is action. It is the nature of his action that determines the nature of his life. Action is the expression of the will to live through an instrument of action, namely, the mind and

the body. *Jijivisha* or wish to live has as its effects the desire to possess and develop relations with external phenomena, which are created by the same desire in the fashion of its own constitution so that it may find what it wishes to find. That undesirable objects and conditions also are found in the world is due to a confusion in the desirer of what he actually wishes to have. The desiring subject is not clear about its own wants. This confusion ends in the commission of several unwise deeds which are due to lack of insight involved in the taking of the desired course of action. This confusion happens because all actions are, generally, one-sided in their motive. Generally an action is done only with the constricted vision which alone is allowed by that particular course of action without the correct knowledge of all its consequences. When a physician prescribes a medicine for the cure of a disease it is not enough if he just knows that a particular medicine has got the capacity to counteract that disease. He should also know what reactions the drug may bring about in the patient in spite of its allaying that one disease. The individual, when it wants to fulfil a desire, simply knows what action is able to fulfil that desire, without knowing that that same action may disturb several other aspects of life and bring to him as a reaction great grief later on, though it may temporarily enchant the desirer to believe that the desire is fulfilled. This is why the world is both pleasurable and miserable; it is the effect of desires as well as their unforeseen consequences. An individual is born in a particular condition or environment because the individual either wished to live in such a condition or it is

the consequence or reaction of certain actions which it performed either voluntarily or being compelled by the impressions of previous actions. The miseries of the world are the forms of the reactions of foolish and deluded actions performed previously by the inhabitants thereof. The world is the name given to the manner in which the individuals experience in their own selves the reactions of their own desires and actions. The universe is the shadow cast by the desires of the individuals, and it is what the desires are and what the desires sweep away from pure existence as they move towards fulfilment.

Action, ordinarily, therefore, is a movement of the self towards the not-self and extra-ordinarily a movement of the not-self towards the Self. But generally the latter process is not included in the category of what we understand by action. The latter is the natural absorption of the Spirit into itself, a genuine unfoldment, or rather the pristine illumination of itself to itself. It is therefore the process of the cessation of action, though all processes are actions in the strict sense. By action we mean the expression of a desire, and movement towards Truth is not the effect of a desire, because it is a desire to destroy desire, an effort to stop effort. Such a desire is not a desire, and such an action is not an action. It is the flaming march of the soul towards its extension into infinity. When Shankara contends that action and knowledge are like darkness and light respectively, he refers to the action of the ego directed to the acquisition of objects and states circumscribed by space, time and causation. Such an action is evidently alien to the characteristics of the knowledge of Truth.

The human being is included in the outward Nature and therefore he has to obey the law of Nature. viz., action or change for the better. By human being we mean an outer crust of conscious life, the changing superficial vestment of true being. Hence, the human being is the form of a transient cloak put on and animated by the eternal Self. The more the love for a thing, the more one becomes the slave of that thing. Man is a slave of the body because he loves it and because of this love he has to act. Therefore, the wise aspirant should perform action knowing that it is not possible to cease from action as long as he is bound by human consciousness. But this should be done with the knowledge of the limitations of action, with the knowledge that action not properly guided by right discrimination may lead to self- imprisonment and sorrow.

This *mantra* of the Upanishad lays down the law of action, that one should wish to live by performing action, because wishing to live and ceasing from action do not go hand in hand. If man wishes to live, he has to act. If he does not act, he cannot live. Freedom from action does not simply mean freedom from bodily movement, but freedom from objective thinking, feeling and willing. The second *mantra* refers to life in the mind and the body, while the first to life in the Spirit.

Mantra 3

Devilish are the worlds covered over by dense darkness, which are reached by those who have killed their Self. The regions experienced by the destroyers of the Self, i.e., those who are ignorant of the Self, are devilish or godless because

they are destitute of purity and light, devoid of *sattva-guna*, cut off from the knowledge of Truth. They are devilish because experiences there are extremely painful and antagonistic to the Divine Presence. People who reject the Divine Self and love the undivine matter, which is subjectively called the body and objectively the world, have such experiences as are characterised by extreme repentance for having committed the evil of not knowing the Self. The *asuras* or the devils are those who have deserted the One Immutable Being.

In this sense all individuals are *asuras* in different degrees, because they experience the material sheaths or the bodies. These realms of these unfortunate beings are enveloped by dense darkness in the night of the Self. A desire that is a desertion of Truth takes a form later which gives very unpleasant experiences to the desirer, because his experience is opposite to Absolute-Experience. Such people grope in spiritual darkness or blindness, which is the mother of sorrow. Into such dark regions do these who are untrue to their Self enter. They get bad births. A bad birth is a condition of life where craving is the ruler, where mistake is the governing law, where confusion and delusion are the factors controlling life, where evil is perpetrated and intense sorrow is experienced. This is the fruit of not knowing Truth and catching untruth, the result of the wandering of the *jiva* in the waterless desert of *samsara*, the effect of eating the forbidden fruit, the fruit of mental and sensuous contacts which sow the seed of the torture of transmigration.

A world or a region is called a *loka*, which means etymologically a condition of experience where everything that is sown is reaped, whether sweet or bitter. A person can experience the fruits of his actions even in this very life. Only extremely powerful actions that give rise to such intense results as cannot be experienced by this present body are reserved for future births. Many times a very intense desire is fulfilled at once. Mild desires are fulfilled later on. Therefore a world of experience is not so much an independently real objective mass of matter as a field of experience where individuals find the required atmosphere to manifest and experience the results of their thoughts and actions.

Destroying the Self means not to be aware of the Self, to feel it as non-existent and consequently reject it. Since, however, it is not possible to reject the Self completely, - for it is not essentially different from him who rejects it, - this rejection takes the form of sense-contacts accelerated by mental desires. Sensuousness being an undivine condition the experiences consequent upon it are devilish and tormenting. The *mantra* teaches therefore that knowledge of the Self is absolutely necessary in order to transcend the recurring pains of birth, life and death.

Mantra 4

The Atman is motionless, one alone, swifter than the mind. It is not overtaken by the senses, because it is prior to them. It is ahead of them. Others run fast to overtake it, but it is before them even while sitting. On the basis of this Self does Hiranyagarbha make actions possible.

The Self is motionless, because it is eternal. It is one, because duality is non-eternal. Individuality and motion mean changing from one condition to another, which means death. The Self, being permanent, is free from individuality and motion. Because the Self is omnipresent it exists wherever the mind goes and is even beyond the province of the mind. The mind may run with the greatest speed to any place or time, but the Self is already there, it being the very implication of the existence and activity of the mind. The senses cannot overtake the Self because the senses have got two defects. One is that they always run away from the Self, and the other is that they cannot work except on the basis of the Self. The Self is prior to every conception and function. Even before we begin to think properly consciousness is already there, because, without it, even thinking is not possible. The external instruments of sense are very quick in their activities of reaching their respective objects, but they cannot reach even an aspect of the true Self, because they are less than the mind which again is less than the Self. The whole meaning of the *mantra* is that there is nothing but the Atman and hence there is no question of reaching it through any activity of the mind and the senses. This Atman can be known not by struggling through the senses but by pacifying the senses and withdrawing the mental functions. The actions of the ego cannot win final victory, because the ego is not true to the Self.

The Self is like ether, everywhere, and therefore its characteristics as described in this Mantra stand for this one main characteristic, viz., Omnipresence, which explains

every other attribute belonging to the Self. The Self is free from all the *dharmas* of *samsara*, being not subject to any transformation. It is one, ever changeless, and appears to be many only to the deluded mind, because of its conjunction with diverse bodies. It is present already at the destination of the mind and the senses, even before they reach it. It goes beyond all functions and their results even without itself performing any function and ever resting in itself.

On the basis of this Self, the creator, Hiranyagarbha, makes possible the manifold activity of the universe. *Hiranyagarbha* is the active agent who grounds Himself in the Absolute Self in the execution of cosmic functions. The Absolute, when it is translated into the creative principle of the cosmos, becomes the dynamic and omniscient organiser and master thereof. In short, Hiranyagarbha is the Absolute set into action. The meaning of all this is that every function of the universe is carried on properly, merely through the very existence of the Absolute, even if it does not perform any act.

Mantra 5

It moves, and it moves not. It is far, and it is near. It is inside all this, and also outside all this. The movement of the Atman is like the movement of the sun with reference to a perceiver. The sun does not really move; only the clouds move. It is the mind that shifts its centres of thought, and consciousness appears to follow it because of its omnipresent nature. The mind cannot move outside the reality of the Atman. Its motion is within Truth, but, because it works in terms of forms or particular centres, it

moves and changes itself. And because the Atman-consciousness is reflected through the mind, the reflection appears to move when really the medium it is that moves. In itself, the Atman does not move, because it is eternal. It is very far, because it is infinite and without boundaries. Also it appears to be very far to the ignorant, because it is not possible to know it even in crores (tens of millions) of births through any worldly means. It is very near, because it is the heart of all. It is nearer than even the mind. It is the central existence of every being here; there is nothing nearer than the Atman. It is inside all this, because it is the subtlest principle immanent in everything. It is outside everything, because it is the supreme transcendental being outside all names and forms. It is not exhausted in this universe. In the Purusha Sukta it is said figuratively that 3/4th of God is outside the universe.

The Atman is intense knowledge, without internal or external restrictions.

Mantras 6 and 7

Who sees all beings in his own Self and the Self in all beings, - he does not shrink away from anything, i.e., does not get disgusted with anything. In whom, the knower, all beings have become the Self, - to him, who beholds unity, where is delusion, where is sorrow? The person who has established himself in the Absolute Self sees everything situated in himself, because he is the support and the possibility of all beings. This realisation comes to him through absolute renunciation which means the transcendence of all particular forms and diving into the

general substance which enters into the very fibre of the particularities. Because of this knowledge of the oneness of all beings there is no reason for him to get disgusted with any form or to be attached to any form. He knows that he lives in all bodies and that it is his spirit that works the life of the different individuals. He is the cosmic life in which all individual lives are included. Because of his separation from the body, the senses and the mind, he has got a full knowledge of and a control over all these objective functions. He controls the whole universe, because he has no attachment to it. Knowledge and power are the results of supreme renunciation. The sage with Self-realisation experiences himself as the undifferentiated witness of all changes and modifications. He is the unchanging Being who underlies all beings. Hence he knows everything that changes. And everything has his Self as the basis. He neither loves nor hates anything. Special attitudes and relationships are developed towards objects only when they are believed to be other than the Self. The differenceless Atman does not allow of any such distinction within its undivided existence. When an object is considered to be as much real as the subject or at least to have some reality, the value of the subject is limited, whereby the state of Absoluteness is denied. If the Absolute is at all possible, duality can never be possible. Absolute-Experience is non-relational. This knowledge destroys all delusion and sorrow. Such objective experiences as grief and delusion have no meaning in the state of Absolute Unity. Pleasure and pain, confusion and mistake, are all the results of ignorance and desire which are possible only in the case of

an individual. The Absolute Being can have no such individual experiences. The cause of misery, together with all its effects, is completely rooted out in the state of the Absolute. This is the experience of the sage.

Mantra 8

The Atman is everywhere, pure, bodiless, scatheless, muscleless, taintless, untouched by sin, omniscient, wise, omnipotent, transcendent and Self-existent. It is this Atman that is the basis of the division of actions among the divinities presiding over time. These characteristics of the Atman deny the possibility of its having either the physical, the subtle or the causal body. It is described as being free from bodily parts like muscles, the substance of the subtle body and the impurity of the causal body. For the same reason, it is untainted by actions, whether virtuous or vicious.

On the basis of the Self does the cosmic creator, Hiranyagarbha, allot the different functions to the respective divinities concerned with the rule over time. This allotment of duties is based on the Law of the Absolute Self; and hence this Law can be overruled by none. The world works with great system and order because it is based on the system of the Absolute. The law of action and reaction fully illustrates the beauty of this law of equilibrium based on the Absolute. All the appearing opposites are reconciled and brought into harmony by this *sutratma* or the Thread-Soul which connects together the different individualities and removes the contradictions that appear to separate the individuals from each other. The allotment of duties to the

different divinities by the *sutratma* is in accordance with the different stages of evolution experienced by the individuals with regard to whom the duties are performed by the divinities. This means that this allotment is not arbitrary, but it is the law of the Absolute which takes into consideration the condition of every being of the universe. When the universe is dissolved into *ishvara*, all individuals exist in their potentialities, having all their desires buried and not fulfilled. The nature of the universe to be subsequently manifested is dependent upon what farm the different unfulfilled desires of all the Jivas remaining unliberated take. The universe therefore has got such a form and is of such a nature as is necessitated by the constitution of the individuals that make up the universe. Hiranyagarbha is, therefore, not, the real direct creator of the universe but the Divine Consciousness that makes the manifestation of the universe possible. Hence He is neither a doer nor an enjoyer. The conclusion is that appearances do not affect Reality, however intense they may appear to be.

This *mantra* implies that the truth of things is not conditioned by values that are valid for the human being. All values are negated. The moment an individual thinks of something it thinks of it in terms of certain values or attributes. This erroneous perception is the cause of bondage. The only eternal value which is found in all things and which is common to all things is existence, whatever its nature be. The attribution of particular values, however, is the result of personal interest and narrow vision on the part of the perceiving individual. The essential nature of all

being is such that it cannot be known by a perceiver as long as he does not cease from looking through the stained glass of his mind. Correct perception should get over preconceived notions. Here comes the necessity for self-denial, a denial of personality, a surrender of the ego in the attempt to exist as that which is common to all. Every particular is only a partial aspect of the whole, but the whole contains all the particulars within itself. This general whole being is the Atman that is in all. Only the individual values are special to each individual. The waves of the ocean may be of different size, and it is possible to create distinctions among these waves, but these distinctions vanish when the common character of water that is in all waves is known. The Atman transcends and includes every created being. All values, except existence, are the effects of the relations that the subject develops with the objects. Relations being private and unreal, all values, too, are unreal. Pure existence, which is independent of all individualistic values, alone is real.

Mantras 9 to 11

Into dense darkness they enter, who worship *avidya*, into greater darkness, as it were, they enter, who worship *vidya*. The results achieved through the worship of *vidya* and *avidya* are different from each other. One who knows *vidya* and *avidya* together crosses over death through *avidya* and becomes immortal through *vidya*. *Avidya* is lack of knowledge of the Self, giving rise to desire and action. It is ignorance which extends through various degrees in the world of manifestation. Absence of Self-knowledge always

expresses itself as a desire or a wish for something external, whether seen or unseen. The experiences of those who believe in the reality of these phenomenal worlds are always negative and objective. They try their best to develop relationships and contacts with the objects of these worlds, thinking that they can acquire perfect happiness thereby. All contacts end in sorrow, all actions give rise to perishable fruits. Nothing that is the result of the struggle of the ego is long-lasting. Therefore, people who worship and love the world and its contents enter into dense darkness, viz., death after death. Their experiences are painful because of the lack of the light of knowledge. But, there is one advantage in this state of ignorance, viz., the absence of egoism. There is opportunity for these ignorant ones to rise to higher states, if only they get proper guidance. They have no egoism because their intellect is not developed. They follow merely the instincts of nature.

Those who worship *vidya*, i.e., the knowledge of different divinities or celestial beings, appear to fall into greater darkness. They have knowledge, and hence egoism, too. Here knowledge does not mean the knowledge of Brahman, but lower, relative knowledge. Those who worship a celestial being, a divinity or God himself with form are led to the belief that their state is the all. Because what they aspire for is superior to the human region it appears as though it is good and worth coveting. In fact this knowledge is imperfect, capricious and perishable, because it is objective and not absolute. There is no hope of further rising up in the case of those who are satisfied with the present lot. This *vidya* is worse than *avidya*, because *avidya*

at least produces pain and makes one understand that the present condition is unsatisfactory, while *vidya* deceives a person into the belief that he is perfect and there is no need for further progress. A little knowledge is more dangerous than no knowledge. Those who are satisfied with the celestial region have to be reborn as individuals performing action for the attainment of happiness, because the effect of *upasana* or this lower knowledge has an end. One cannot rejoice in heaven eternally.

In this *mantra* and in the following two a combination of *vidya* and *avidya* is advised. This, however, does not mean that the knowledge of the Absolute can be combined with desires and actions that are the effects of ignorance. Action, being relative in its character, can be combined with relative knowledge and not with Absolute Knowledge. Relative knowledge means the effect of the *upasana* of a deity. Both *karma* and *upasana* require body-consciousness, without which they have no value. They cannot be combined with a knowledge that is all-pervading and therefore transcends the body. Objects belonging to the same class join together but not those belonging to different classes. Action therefore should be performed with the knowledge of its causes and effects with respect to one's progress in the path to perfection. The egoless state of ignorance and the illumination of knowledge combined together give rise to true knowledge which is egoless consciousness.

Performance of actions with the full knowledge that it is the law of life that manifests itself as action and therefore without any reason for the desire for the results of such

actions makes one get disgusted with the world of actions, frees him from attachment and liberates him from the trammels of death. Through the knowledge of the divine being, viz., the divinity whose *upasana* is performed, one attains to that divinity, and opens the door to immortality. *Upasana* of any divinity, when it is performed with a desire to attain that divinity alone, gives one the temporary freedom of the attainment of that divinity, and later makes one take birth as an individual; but when action is combined with this knowledge, action becomes selfless. Action has got a quality of producing pain, and knowledge by nature is illuminating. When action is illuminated by knowledge, it becomes the source of the experience of pain born of *viveka*, not pain born of ignorance. Motiveless action combined with the knowledge of divinity does not cause one to revert to the mortal world, but allows one to attain *krama-mukti* or gradual liberation through the passage of that divinity of *upasana*. The highest divinity of *upasana* is Hiranyagarbha, the Cosmic Being, and the result of this *upasana* is the attainment of Hiranyagarbha. The *upasaka* reaches this state, and from there he passes onward to the Absolute, provided his *upasana* is not restricted to the region of Hiranyagarbha alone.

Therefore, a combination of *karma* and *upasana* is beneficial; it leads to *krama-mukti*; but when they are performed separately, they lead to their respective specified limited results, and make one take birth as an individual.

Mantras 12 to 14

Into dense darkness they enter, who worship the Unmanifest; into greater darkness, as it were, they enter, who worship the Manifest. The results of these two Upasanas are different from each other. When the knowledge of the Manifest and of the Unmanifest are combined, one crosses over death through the Unmanifest and becomes immortal through the Manifest. The Unmanifest is the original condition of equilibrium of *gunas*, viz., *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. This condition is the primordial matter that is the substance of the universe in its causal condition. This is the same as *maya* or *prakriti*. It is also called *avyakrita* or the undifferentiated. One who worships or adores this Unmanifest gets dissolved in the Unmanifest and becomes unified with that dark equilibrium where there is no consciousness and hence no effort is possible. When this Unmanifest manifests itself, those who are dissolved in the Unmanifest are reborn as individuals. This Unmanifest is the origin of both the causes and effects of all actions and hence, it is concerned only with the universe and not with Brahman.

The Manifest is that which is produced from this Unmanifest. This is the same as Hiranyagarbha. One who worships Him enters into greater darkness, as it were, because he is tempted by the glory of the region of Hiranyagarbha, and does not attempt at the higher salvation. The eight *siddhis* and all possible greatness come to one who attains this Hiranyagarbha; but there is the danger of being satisfied with this state, and hence it is worse than getting dissolved in the Unmanifest which at

least gives rise to the pain of birth and death and makes one realise the unsatisfactory condition one is in. Knowledge that is not perfect and is within the ken of *prakriti* is productive of egoism. *Vikshepa* or distraction is worse than Avarana. The state of Hiranyagarbha is one of *vikshepa*, because there is universal objective consciousness and cosmic enjoyment in it. But even Hiranyagarbha gets dissolved in the Absolute and hence his state is less than the Absolute. The state of getting dissolved in the Unmanifest is called *prakriti-laya*, which is not the same as *moksha*, but a temporary winding up of all activities. The word *prakriti-laya* has got a special meaning. All beings are dissolved in *prakriti* at the end of the universe, but these cannot be called *prakriti-laya*s, because they have got the potentiality of reverting to ordinary individuality, since, even in this state of dissolution, their individualistic *samskaras* are not destroyed. A *prakriti-laya* is one who does not once again become an ordinary individual, but being reduced to the fundamental finest essence of the omnipresent *prakriti* becomes the omnipresent Lord of the universe.

The worship of the Unmanifest gives one knowledge of everything of the universe. One understands the nature of the essential constituents of life. The pain of death is the result of not having this understanding. Pain is the result of the belief in the reality of a centralisation of certain aspects of *prakriti* by the consciousness of desire. The pain of death is not felt when there is the knowledge that death is a change of the constituents of personality which get reduced to their fundamental units. Even as water flows in a river, life flows in existence. Every moment there is fresh life,

even as every moment there is fresh water in a river. Not being able to bear this flow or change is called pain, but the knowledge of all the essential constituents of this flow negates all pain, because knowledge is the opposite of attachment to particular forms taken by these constituents. Knowledge of the essence of *prakriti*, therefore, gives a full knowledge of the entire life of the universe and thus pain and the consciousness of change which are the characteristics of the individual are not felt. Hence one crosses over death through the worship of the Unmanifest.

Through the worship of the Manifest or Hiranyagarbha one attains relative immortality and thence *krama-mukti*. The meaning of these *mantras* is that one should combine the worships of the Manifest and the Unmanifest, because an exclusive worship of Hiranyagarbha considering Him as distinct from the universe will not allow one to proceed to the Absolute, since that aspect of the Absolute, viz., the *prakriti*, which is rejected and not meditated upon, shall pull one dawn to individual life. No distinction should be made between God and the world; otherwise the meditation would be partial and liberation would not be possible because of lack of completeness.

The negation of death through the worship of *prakriti* is not the cessation of becoming, but the non-experience of the pain of becoming. The change is there, but the change is not felt as something destructive and undesirable. The attainment of immortality through the worship of the Manifest is not resting in the Absolute but the absence of the pain caused by defects like poverty, vice and craving, as a consequence of the attainment of universal wealth, power

and knowledge. Therefore, these two conditions are different from the realisation of the Absolute.

Mantra 15

The face of Truth is covered by a golden vessel. O Sun! Remove that for me whose law is to behold the Truth. The results achieved by human means and heavenly means end in the state of *prakriti-laya*. This is the end and the highest achievement in *samsara*. *moksha* is, however, different from and beyond this. It requires the total destruction of desires. Those who cannot attain *moksha* immediately attain it gradually through the passage of the Sun. This *mantra* and the next *mantra* are a prayer to the Sun for allowing one passage across to the Divine Being. Truth is veiled over by a vessel of gold. The essential consciousness within the Sun is hidden by the external disc which dazzles the eyes of the beholder. That which we see in the Sun is not what is within the Sun. That which is outside covers what is inside. Brahman within the Sun is covered over by the golden disc that alone is seen. It also means that the whole universe of creation with all its names and forms is a golden vessel. Gold shines and attracts the beholder. The world of names and forms attracts the mind, and the Truth within is not seen. My law is this Truth. My vision is based on Truth; it is the perception of Truth. This perception is not sense-perception but perception whose law is Truth, i.e., spiritual perception free from the processes of the seer, seeing and seen. Withdraw your rays, O shining God; do not tempt me with what you are not, allow me to pass

through the present experiences to the true experience of the Spirit; let me behold what you are really.

Mantra 16

O All-sustaining Lord! O Wise One! O Controller of all! O Absorber of everything! O Son of Prajapati! Collect and remove your rays; let me behold that most auspicious luminous form of yours, for I am that *purusha* within you. The prayer implies that the realisation of the Self is not attained as a result of begging or borrowing, but it is the attainment of what belongs to oneself. It is the inheritance of one's right and becoming what truly befits oneself and in fact what oneself is. However much one may beg or pray, one cannot get what is not one's. Hence Self-realisation is knowing oneself.

Mantra 17

Let the breath go to the immortal *prana*. Let the body be reduced to ashes. O mind, remember your deeds. This is a prayer for the dissolution of the individual principle of breathing, i. e., the individual *prana*, in the cosmic immortal *prana* or Hiranyagarbha. The body is burnt and goes to the earth. The meaning is that the effects shall go to the causes. The subtle body purified by *karma* and *upasana* rises to the Sun in order to pass through it. The word *kratu* means sacrifice or the divinity of the sacrifice or *upasana* or the divinity of *upasana* or the mind that performs the *upasaria*. *Kratu* is a sacrifice, and *upasana* also is a sacrifice, because it is an act. The actions done by a person are witnessed by the divinity presiding over the sacrifice. The prayer is to this divinity so that He may remember what

fate is to befall this person after death in accordance with his actions. Here Agni is prayed to as the chief priest of the sacrifice and the witnessing divinity of the sacrifice. It may also be a prayer to the mind to remember its deeds like *upasana*, etc., for the time of remembering has now come.

Mantra 18

O Agni! Lead us along the right path for the sake of the attainment of the Supreme. O God! You possess universal knowledge; destroy our crooked sins. We offer to you our best salutations. This is a prayer to the witness of all actions done by an individual, for taking him along the bright path of the gods, after passing along which there is no return to mortality. Agni here stands, for the principle of intelligence which guides all thoughts and actions; it is the gateway to universal knowledge. Agni is like a torch that illuminates the path of *krama-mukti*. There are several guardians of this path, who become greater and superior as one advances along, until at last an immortal person guides the soul. Agni is one of the guides on the path.

Salutation to Agni means the offering of the best tribute and homage to Agni. Salutation to another signifies the desire to unite with another. Salutation is that which pleases one the best. Instead of offering physical objects, that which gives immediate satisfaction is offered.

Conclusion

The Isavasyopanishad advises the combination of action with objective knowledge and not with Absolute knowledge. The Absolute is always opposed to objectiveness. Action and Absolute knowledge differ from

one another in their causes, natures and results. Action is caused by the sense of imperfection. Its nature is distraction and its result is perishable. Knowledge is caused by perfection. Its nature is peace and its result is eternal. Hence action and knowledge are different from one another. It is not possible to say that action can be combined with knowledge in the beginning, though not in the end, because the moment there is the dawn of knowledge there is the cessation of action. It is not possible for fire to be hot and cold at the same time. Knowledge cannot co-exist with its opposite, viz., action that is characterised by motion. Knowledge is motionless. When the cause of action, viz., ignorance, is removed, all its effects also are removed.

Further, if the Upanishad had propounded the combination of action with Absolute knowledge, there would be no meaning in the aspirant's asking for a passage through the Sun after the attainment of Absolute knowledge. Absolute knowledge gives rise to immediate realisation or Sadyo-mukti. The fact that the prayer is for passing through a passage shows that the dying person has not yet attained Absolute knowledge. Hence the combination of action is only with relative knowledge, for, in Absolute knowledge there is no passing to any region, and there is no motion, whatever. Absoluteness means existence merely, and not changing or moving.

KENOPANISHAD

Introductory

Karma and *upasana* act as steps leading to *jnana*. The immediate reality experienced by the human being is the physical body connected with the physical world. The function of the body is to act objectively in relation to external existence. It is never possible to keep one's individuality inactive, because activity is a necessity that urges the individuality to transcend itself in some other state that is superior to the preceding one. Action can be destroyed through action alone, even as iron is cut by iron. Individuality can be transcended through individuality.

Upasana is a mental act, while *karma* may also be a physical act. Mind also is a constituent of individuality. The mind can be transcended through mind itself. The laws of the body and the mind are overcome through *karma* and *upasana*. *Karma* should be done as a necessity of individual life and not as a process of self-satisfaction. This is the distinction between selflessness and selfishness. *Upasana* is the method of subduing the distractive character of the mind through concentration on the one objective reality, viz., God. God is the unified wholeness of objectivity, though in *upasana* it is not possible to consider God as the secondless Absolute. The body becomes steady and calm; the mind becomes unshaken and the aspirant becomes fit for the higher state of Self-knowledge by purification attained thus through *karma* and *upasana*.

All actions done for the sake of the satisfaction of oneself become mothers of rebirth, because every desire has to be fulfilled today or tomorrow. The vastness of desires

makes it impossible for the individual to fulfil all of them in this life itself. The nature of the future birth is determined by the desires that are left unfulfilled in this birth. Pleasures and pains experienced in this life are the results of the positive and the negative reactions of desires and actions. Knowledge is possible, therefore, only for one who ceases from desiring objects, whether physical or psychological, real or ideal.

Even the memory of desires and experiences has to be erased out. Nothing that is objective can be perpetual, because something becomes an object only when it has a relationship with a subject. All relationships constitute bondage. The mere fact that objects exist in the world does not constitute bondage. It is the relationship that is developed between one object and another that constitutes bondage. Desire for the knowledge of Brahman is not a desire, because such a desire is like the movement of a straw towards fire. Desire shall be burnt by the knowledge of Brahman. Movement towards the Self within is not the development of a desire, but the process of the cessation of desire. The senses and the mind get withdrawn and dissolved in the unity of the Self. Immortality is the condition of the experience of the Self as free from the connections that it appears to have with the not-Self.

The Mundaka Upanishad has said that the seeker after knowledge should first investigate the worthlessness of regions which are the effect of actions performed in this world. He should get disgusted with the world through understanding and not merely through tradition. Reason should strengthen faith, logic should supplement intuition.

This shall bring about perfect *vairagya* born of *viveka*. *Vairagya* is not possible without a previous conviction, and conviction is not possible without analytical knowledge. This power of analysis comes to a person, first through past meritorious deeds, next through Satsanga, and later through *svadhyaya* and *vichara*.

Karma and *jnana* - *karma* is a modification of the present state into another state, directed by a necessity. Every action is based on a voluntary or involuntary desire, expressed or potential. One does not move without a purpose, and every purpose is a limitation, which shows that the actor is not complete in himself. But knowledge is not an action. Knowledge is being. If knowledge is an action it should be a means to some other end, but we do not find any end to be reached beyond knowledge. Knowledge is something like attaining to oneself, which, if it is called a process, would contradict experience. One cannot reach oneself or attain oneself or move towards oneself except by knowing oneself. A person who is asleep or dreaming may be said to be away from himself, but if he wishes to attain himself or go to himself in that imagined state of aberration, he can do it only by waking up from that dream or sleep and not by walking or moving. His body may be carried from place to place, but he will not attain to himself except by waking. Similar is the case with *brahma-jnana*. One cannot reach Brahman through an act, because all acts are a proceeding away from the Self. Knowledge is subsisting and not proceeding. Knowledge is not a means to an end, but the end itself. After knowing we have to do nothing, but after doing we have to know

something. This is the difference between action and knowledge. Knowledge is, therefore, possible only after the dissolution of all actions, through hearing, reflection and meditation preceded by discriminative dispassion. This is the reason why the Upanishad has declared that the Self neither decreases nor increases through action, because action is a motion, and the Self is motionless.

Even if there is no intimate relationship between Self-knowledge and action, it is possible for the active individual to transcend his active individuality because of the fact that the Self pervades the individual as his very existence. The relationship between the individual and the Supreme is one of identity and not separation, but the imagined separation allows the possibility of *sadhana* towards perfection. Though *sadhana* is an action in the realm of *adhyasa* (superimposition), it is possible to get rid of individual consciousness through *sadhana*, because the process of attainment also is connected with the *adhyasa*. The conclusion is, therefore, that the attempt for Self-knowledge should be preceded by the longing for the same as the result of renunciation given rise to discrimination. The Self is of the nature of Attainment. Therefore, it cannot be attained through any amount of external exertion or striving, and no striving is there without an objective motive. The Self is attained through putting an end to all motives and necessities governing the laws of the phenomenal universe. That which is one's own Nature cannot be dealt with in any way. It cannot be purified, obtained, changed or defined. The Self is objectless, immaterial, formless and immutable. All our deeds bear

fruits in a world of space and time. That which is not done (uncreated) cannot be attained through what is done (created). Anything that is obtained through perishable instruments is itself perishable. Everything of the world is perishable, and, therefore, nothing of this world can be an instrument in the attainment of the Self. Objective actions give rise to objective fruits. Mental actions give rise to mental results. The effect is of the same nature as the cause. The Self is neither a cause nor an effect. Therefore, all relationships and processes pertaining to causes and effects are external to the nature of the Self. The means adopted should befit the nature of the end. The end is immortality and the means to it, therefore, cannot be a mortal one. Knowledge is attained by the Self, not by doing something, but by not doing anything. This comes to cessation of all desires, whether subjective or objective, manifested or unmanifested. Knowledge is the same as existence or being, while thoughts and actions are becomings or changes.

Brahman is *vastu-tantra* (dependent on the object of knowledge). The knowledge of Brahman is not dependent on the mind of man. One cannot conceive of Brahman as one likes. It is minds that differ and not the Self. Conceptions and experiences belong to the mind. The Self is the general ground of all beings, and its knowledge therefore is the same to all. Different people cannot have different kinds of the knowledge of Brahman. The knowledge of Brahman is dependent on Itself. But thoughts and actions are dependent on the individual. One can change one's thoughts and actions as one likes - they are *purusha-tantra* (dependent on the individual subject). This

is the reason why conceptions and actions which are the characteristics of the mind and the senses have no access to the knowledge of Brahman. *Brahma-jnana* is possible after effacing oneself, after becoming non-existent, from the worldly point of view. It is the union of subject and object that is meant by Self-experience. The Self is dependent on its own greatness. Its glory is unsullied by external changes. *Moksha* is eternity. Eternity is perpetual changelessness. The Kena Upanishad establishes the truth of the unchanging, witnessing character of the Self.

SECTION ONE

Mantra 1

The Self is the controller and the director of the mind, *prana* and senses. It acts without a body and without a mind. Its action is not a movement, but the law of existence. Its very existence actuates the phenomena of the five external sheaths. These sheaths have borrowed existence and borrowed consciousness. Whatever appears to be good in them belongs to the Self, and whatever imperfection there is, that belongs to the five sheaths. The Self is the cause of external activity even as the sun or the lamp is the cause of worldly work. It is unaffected by actions. It does not do anything, but everything is done because of it.

All actions are controlled by the law of Absoluteness. This accounts for the systematic working of Nature. Existence is an equilibrium, a balance of forces, a dynamic statis. The life of man is, therefore, regulated by the law of

unity. All movements are towards the Self, all thoughts are directed towards the Self, all desires are the desire for the Self, all happiness is the reflection of Self-Bliss. All beings crave for unity. There is no happiness in individuality. But this love for unity is many times distorted in the form of love for the unification of physical objects. This is the cause of metempsychosis. The evil of this world is the effect of the desire for the unity of physical objects, which is an impossibility. The Spirit is unity and not the objects. Knowingly the mind indulges in evil, because it is unaware of anything beyond the causes of evil. Goodness and truth are metapsychical. Therefore, the mind cannot know real truth and goodness. True goodness dawns when the mind dies. The Self reveals itself when the individual ceases to exist.

Mantra 2

The Self is the hearing consciousness of the ear, and similarly, the consciousness of the other different sense-functions. The organs of hearing, seeing, etc. are not capable of functioning without Self awareness. The nature of the Self can be defined by what it is not and not by what it is. The Self, as it is in itself, is indefinable, because it is devoid of the characteristics that a definition requires. It is not a substance with attributes, nor is it an individual directing the senses, etc. It is nothing to the senses and the mind, though it is everything to itself. Through the acts of deliberation, volition and determination, it is possible for us to infer the nature of the Self. The born, the originated and the compounded substances cannot be explained and

accounted for except on the basis of an unborn, an unoriginated and an uncompounded being. The world of experience is the indicator of the existence of an eternal being. The acceptance of our finitude posits the existence of the Infinite. That we are imperfect means that there is a perfect being. But it is not possible for us to presume that we are perfect now itself, because our experience revolts against that conclusion. When the absence of anything brings about troubles and calamities, the value of its existence is realised. When, without something, nothing can be explained, we have to admit the reality of that something. No experience is explicable except on the substratum of a permanent Self. The feeling of "I" within us refuses to be rejected and asserts itself even before we begin to think. Consciousness is presupposed by thinking. Anything that is a composite of parts must be dependent on a non-composite wholeness of being. Differences can be explained only by non-difference. Corporeality has got a value only on the hypothesis of an incorporeal being. We give value to our bodily existence because we confound the indivisible Self with the divisible body. The senses disagree among one another, but this disagreement is reconciled and set into harmony by the unifying Self within.

In the state of waking, consciousness pervades the body, even as fire makes an iron ball red hot, when it is heated. It becomes difficult to distinguish between the fire and iron in that condition. Similarly the body appears to be the Self because of this pervasion of consciousness over the senses and the body. But consciousness is different from the senses and the body, even as fire is different from the iron ball.

Self-revelation is the nature of the Self. Because of it the senses reveal to us objects. They die without it. As the sun illumines the world, the Self illumines the mind and the body. Thus it is proved that the body is not the Self and that the mind also is not the Self.

Similarly, the *prana* is not the Self. The *prana* is the expression of the mind. It is the connecting link between the mind and the body. The flow of *prana* is regulated by the function of the mind, and the body in turn is controlled by the movements of the *prana*. The condition of the body depends upon how the *prana* works, and the condition of the *prana* depends upon how the mind works, and what desires it has.

There is life in *prana* because of the life of the Self. The *prana* has no life (consciousness) in the deep sleep state when it is disconnected from the Self. There is loss of consciousness of breathing and the other functions of the *prana*. In conclusion, therefore, it is to be known that nothing of the five external sheaths has anything of reality.

Immortality is attained through the knowledge of the fact that the Self is the independent existence. Death is negated because of the absence of desires. Death is the process of the reshuffling of oneself from one condition to another condition. This process is the effect of unfulfilled desires. Nothing is lost when this body is lost, because death is the casting off of what is not needed and the way of entering into what is needed.

Knowledge is disintegration of personality and integration of being. Embodiment is the centralisation of energy by desires attended by consciousness. Generality is

particularised by desires. Everyone wants something and not everything. This separation or partition created by the desires limits the desirer to the form of the object of his desire. This results in the experience of death and birth by the desirer, because he has to maintain the reality of the form of the object of his desire. Knowledge, therefore, consists in the cancelling of the truth of all forms of desires and removing the partition that is created.

The Selfhood attributed to the senses, etc. has to be transcended through the negation of their realities. This requires extraordinary courage or *dhairya*, because it is hard to negate what is experienced as a reality. To realise that the changing of bodies is for one's good, to know that getting rid of individuality is beneficial, to come to the conclusion that impersonality is the real state of being, to detach oneself from one's pet forms of experience, is not easy. Faith in Truth means disbelief in phantoms. Immortality and mortality are utter contradictions. We cannot live in God and at the same time live in the world. The world is a nihil in the glory of the Selfhood of Divinity.

Transcending this world does not mean casting this world away and going to another superior world. The world is a condition of experience, a mode through which we view reality, a form which we have selected out of the immense Ground of forms. As long as we are satisfied with some condition of existence and do not want its other conditions, we are said to live in a perishable world, because no condition is complete. All modes are, after all, distorted aspects and do not reveal to us the fullness of perfection.

Renunciation of this world, therefore, means dissatisfaction with everything that we experience at any time, at any place and under any circumstance. Nothing of this universe should please us, lest we should be pleased with apparitions or thought constructions or dream-objects. Deathlessness is the result of desirelessness, of resting in the condition of wanting nothing at all, nothing of this world, nothing of the other world, nothing of this body, nothing of the mind, nothing of externals or internals. Negation of death means transcendental independence or *kaivalya*. It is to be connected with nothing, to rest in Supreme Subjectness.

The world is the colour that we paint over Truth. This colour is the one in which we appear, and it is variegated. The colours change as we change ourselves. What we are, that the world is. The objects are influenced by the characters of the subjects. The form of what we perceive is dependent on the instruments through which we perceive. The collective mind of all of us gives form and value to what it experiences, and this it does on the basis of the constitution of itself. Whatever be the value or greatness of anything of the world, it is determined by the necessity of the experiencers to experience that value or greatness. The good and the evil of this world are the reactions produced by the wants of individuals, and as such good and evil are not absolute values. The form of the world of objective value ceases to exist the moment the potentialities of wants in the individuals are annihilated, i. e., when the necessity for any form of experience in the cosmos is put an end to. Freedom from desires is something like existing as a granite-mountain that knows no change even when storms

blow over it. It is to exist in the highest sense of absolute non-duality. This is immortality. Though the experience of the Immortal need not necessarily mean the destruction of the body, the body will be incapable of maintaining itself for long, for want of egoistic desires. Therefore, *moksha* in the real sense means existing in the condition of the Truth of bodilessness. The highest *jivanmukti* is immediately followed by *videhamukti*. Brahman is experienced here and now.

Mantra 3

Neither the eye nor the speech nor the mind can reach Reality. These instruments of knowledge reveal objects, not the subject. The subject is the source from which these instruments proceed like rays. The rays are projected outwards, not inwards. Even as fire cannot burn itself, the Self cannot know itself through these instruments. The mind wills and determines with respect to what is within the province of its knowledge. But it cannot will and determine with respect to the Self, because the Self is not a substance which can have relations with anything. It is neither the known nor the unknown. It is not the known because there is no means of knowing it. All our means are phenomenal. What is perishable cannot reach the Imperishable. The means of the knowledge of the Self is itself. The Self is the object of its own knowledge. The knower cannot know the knower through any possible means. Omnipresence negates all relationships and every kind of knowledge is the relationship between the knower and the known. Everything that is known or manifested is

tainted by its distinctness and, therefore, is subject to modification and death. The object of knowledge is set in opposition to the subject, and this opposition prevents the fullness of knowledge on the part of the knower, the knower can never have complete knowledge if the object of knowledge controls him. The possibility of complete knowledge shows that the object of knowledge is controlled by the knower. He can know it in any way he likes, but capricious knowledge is not real knowledge. Real knowledge is ever the same. This is possible when the knower renounces his caprice, i.e., when he does not know the object of knowledge as something separated, in other words, when he knows himself alone. Whatever is known is petty and perishable. It is the cause of pain and misery. It is to be rejected. All contacts are mines of sorrow, the reason for which is that in all processes of knowledge the knower tries to run away from the Truth of himself. Knowledge is the condition of non-opposition and non-contradiction.

An object can be defined or perceived through its class, quality and action. But the Atman does not belong to any class, and it is devoid of quality and action. Perception and inference fail in their attempt to know the Atman. Perception is private knowledge, valid only to the perceivers and therefore not trustworthy. Inference is the result of perception and so it, also, is untrustworthy.

Agama or intuition is the only source of valid knowledge. Perception and inference differ in their characteristics in accordance with different places, times, persons, objects and conditions. Intuitive knowledge is not in need of cognitive instruments or any external source of

knowledge. The knowledge of everything that is known is the result of the interaction of the natures of the subject and the object. But true knowledge is not the result of any interaction. True knowledge is self-luminous. Hence the Atman is not the unknown also.

The Atman is assumed as a postulate in all processes of knowledge. No knowledge is possible without such an assumption of the indubitability of the existence of the Self. One's own Nature cannot be perceived, for want of means. Self existence is free from all doubts and is an established fact. The Self is, therefore, neither to be rejected nor to be grasped or obtained, because of its not being either the known or the unknown. If it is the unknown it becomes an object to be known, i.e., the cause of knowledge. One seeks for a cause because one wants to produce an effect. All effects are perishable, and it is not possible to produce any effect through perfect knowledge. Knowledge does not produce anything. No power is manifested in the state of perfect knowledge. All powers of effects are phantoms. Self-existence never becomes another.

The production of an effect or the manifestation of a power shows that the cause or such a production or manifestation is not perfect in itself. There is nothing worth attaining or manifesting except one's own Self. Nothing other than the Self, the knower, can bring lasting benefit. The Self is not produced, but known. Knowledge, therefore, is not in relation with anything. The desire for anything external to the Self shall meet with a miserable fate. The statement that the Self is other than the known and the

unknown figuratively indicates that the Self is non-relational, unconditioned, infinite.

The inner Self of all, the brilliant light of consciousness, otherwise known as Brahman, does not become an object of itself, because it exists everywhere. Infinity is one and therefore cannot have an object. It knows itself and not another.

This knowledge is revealed to us not through any of our functions but through the gradual cessation of our functions, which is the result of advancement in evolution, deepened experience, contact with the wise and disillusionment of oneself through silent introspection. Knowledge does not come by leaps and bounds. It follows a systematic process of unveiling the fact of existence. It is not possible to climb over the higher without stepping over the lower. The grosser manifestations have to be paid their dues, have to be pacified, not repressed, before our transcending them. No brute force, no dogmatic tradition, no pet belief can be a help in the attainment of knowledge. Clear understanding, free from all passions and preconceived notions, alone acts as a torch illuminating the path to perfection.

Mantras 4 to 8

Brahman should be known to be other than what can be expressed by speech, thought of by the mind, seen by the eyes, heard by the ears, or revealed by life's functions. The nature of Truth can be known through denials alone. We cannot call Brahman *sat*, because it is the opposite of *asat*. It cannot be called *asat,* because it is the opposite of *sat*. It

cannot be called *sadasat*, i.e., a combination of *sat* and *asat*, because this becomes self-contradictory. It cannot be said to be beyond *sat* and *asat*, because this is unintelligible. Thus we are cornered in every way, and all definitions of Brahman become impossible. The only way of ascertaining it is, therefore, to deny everything that we know through the senses or through the mind. Brahman is sometimes called in the Upanishads *asat* or non-existence, because the seers of the Upanishads wanted to make it clear that Brahman is nothing that exists according to our conceptions of existence. Brahman is also called many times *asamprajnata* or the unconscious or the unknown, because it is nothing that is known to us, and it is not knowledge as we understand knowledge to be. It is therefore called super-being or transcendental being, super-consciousness or transcendental consciousness. It is called *sat* or Being because the world is *asat* or non-being or perishable. It is called *chit* or consciousness because the world is *achit*, *jada* or unconsciousness. It is called *ananda* because the world is Duhkha or sorrow. It is called great because everything else is small. Thus, every characteristic which we attribute to the Divine Being is the opposite of what we experience here. But we cannot know exactly what the Divine Being is as it is in itself. Our knowledge of the perfected condition is the result of a logical deduction from our imperfect experiences. Its experience is admitted because nothing can be accounted for without such an admission. It is the one factor that gives meaning to life and explains our thoughts and behaviours, speeches and actions. Brahman, therefore, should not be mistaken to be

anything that is experienced by any individual in any of its conditions. The experience of Brahman means the destruction of individuality. The expressions of individuality are always partitioned into the knower and the known. The *upasana* (devoted worship) of a personal Divinity, no doubt, integrates the mental consciousness, collects its rays, makes it one whole being, raises the individual above the pains of the world. But it is not the same as *brahma-sakshatkara* (realisation of Brahman), because, in *upasana*, duality is not destroyed. Every object of *upasana* is based on *purusha-tantra*; the nature of the object of *upasana* depends upon the desire of the *upasaka*. The objects of *upasana*, therefore, differ from one person to another; but Brahman cannot differ like that. Brahman is vastu-*tantra*. Its knowledge is unshaken and dependent on nothing. It is the grand, immobile Self-existence. *Upasanas* are, therefore, helps, means, to the knowledge of Brahman. But the object of *upasana* is not Brahman.

The nature of the object of *upasana* is not characterised by pure consciousness, but it is defined by the devout thought of the *upasaka*. Truth, as it is in itself, is, *chinmatra-svarupa* (of the nature of pure consciousness alone), not defined by thought. The word Brahman is derived from the root *brimh*, which means to swell, to grow great, to pervade all space, to be complete and perfect. All qualities that we attribute to Brahman are the effects of our devotion. Even the best qualities super-imposed on Brahman are what we consider as the best. The realisation of the Absolute means the renunciation of all our ideas, good or bad, great or low. It is to rest simple and silent,

calm and undisturbed, in the state of wanting nothing. It is to be nothing at all, in the strictest sense. Supreme attainment is the result of supreme renunciation. When we, as persons, become non-existent, we are said to exist as Supreme Existence.

Conceptions, perceptions and forms of experience given rise to by personal interests cannot have ultimate value. Perfect and disinterested existence means the renunciation of all particularised forms of experience. It is not possible to bring down the Self to the level of what it is not and what is less than it. Knowledge, desire and action connected with the human being are guided by the Self and therefore they cannot guide the Self; they are dependent. Whatever is expressed is mortal, and whatever is not the Self is expressed.

SECTION TWO

Mantras 1 to 3

The realisation of Brahman does not take the form of personal experience. One cannot say or tell that one has known one's Self well, because everything that is known becomes an object. The Self is the knower of all, and is not known by anything. To say that one has known it is to limit it, and to say that one has not known it is, again, to limit it. The knower does not know anything other than the knower, which cannot be called the knowledge of the knower. Knowledge works on a dualistic basis. But the Self is non-dual. There is no knower other than the Self. It alone appears as the one and the many, as the experiencer, and

also the experienced. The question of the knower, the knowledge and the known does not arise regarding the pure Self. In all processes of knowledge neither the subject is well known nor the object. Human knowledge is partial knowledge. Every experience of the human being is limited. The glory and the greatness of the world of experience is a distorted shadow of the Supreme Being. No manifested knowledge can be complete, because every knowledge is either of the subject or of the object, and neither the subject nor the object is really known through any form of knowledge, because the knowledge of the object is the expression of a subjective imperfection, and the knowledge of the subject, also, is thereby concealed, for objective consciousness prevents subjective awareness. Individual knowledge always hangs midway between the knower and the known, and it is capable of knowing neither, in truth. Therefore, knowledge of Brahman cannot be expressed.

It is not possible to have a little knowledge of Brahman, as Brahman cannot be divided. Either there is full knowledge of it or no knowledge of it. Limited experiences are not in any way even a little of *brahma-chaitanya*. Different kinds of experience, lower and higher in degree, are the results of the degrees in the manifestation of the mind. All our experiences are mental. We cannot pierce through the mind as long as we exist. Man is the same as mind, and mind is the same as desires. Even as cloth is nothing but threads knit together, man is nothing but a bundle of desires. Differences in experience are because of the differences in desires. The lesser the desires, the better and more lasting is the experience. The state of the least

desires means the experience of the greatest reflection of Truth. Higher experiences are nearer to Brahman, because a greater and truer reflection of Brahman is experienced in those states, as higher experiences are the conditions of thinner needs of the mind. But, anyhow, even the highest objective experience is mental, though very near to Truth, and is not the same as Brahman-realisation. Even the nearest is not the same as that to which it is nearest. Hence, there is no such thing as a little realisation of Brahman. As long as there is even a tinge of a single desire, Brahman is not known in truth. A finger can obstruct the vision of a huge sun. A single desire can bar us from the experience of Brahman. When it is said that everything is Brahman, it is not meant that any form of our experiences is in any way Brahman. It only means that forms have no value except on the basis of Brahman. Whatever is truth in forms is a limited and reflected aspect of Brahman. But none can expect to taste even a drop of the ocean of the absolute as long as he wishes to exist, i. e., wishes to think. Every thought is a denial of Brahman, and, therefore, thought and realisation cannot exist together. Where the one is, the other is not. Experience of Brahman has no concessions to thinking. Self-realisation, therefore, is existence as the Impersonal Absolute.

The definition of Brahman as consciousness should not be mistaken to be an attempt to bring down the nature of Brahman to the level of our understanding. We say Brahman is consciousness because nothing of this world is conscious. It is just to differentiate reality from appearance that we term Brahman consciousness. It is to exalt it and

not lower it. Even when we accept that Brahman is *sat* or *chit* we do not confuse it with anything that we know. It is beyond the *sat* and the *chit* which we know of. We reject everything which we know and refuse to be satisfied with anything that comes to us as an experience. We may have the highest possession of experience, but we have to abandon it. Whatever experience one may have, grand and glorious, one should not be under the impression that one's achievement is over. It is an infinite rejection of things and states that we have to practice. There is no end for our denials. One cannot suspect whether one is in the state of Brahman or in a state of Brahman or in a state to be denied. It will be clear when one experiences it. Dissatisfaction and the awareness of 'I'-ness will be the indicators of the imperfection of a particular state of experience. Brahman is doubtless existence and we can experience Brahman only after self-effacement. It is not easy to know it.

Mantra 4

Consciousness should be realised as the fundamental basis of all mental experiences. It should be realised in every state of our life in waking, dreaming and deep sleep. All thoughts are heterogeneous in their nature. They are not connected with one another. But they are experienced as belonging to one person because of the unity of the Self within. Our body, senses and mind are all made up of scattered parts that appear to be a unified whole because of the underlying indivisible essence. If only the Self were not there, our personality would be thrown away into the condition of atoms, disconnected and varied. There is no

difference at all between the building bricks of one body and of another body. All are made up of the same earth, water, fire, air and space. But bodies appear to be different, they act in different ways, because the actor is not the body. Differences are in the desires within. This shows that man is not the body. When we speak to a person we do not speak to the body at all; we speak to the character hidden within. Even the ultimate constituents of this inner character do not differ from person to person. The same force acts as the substantial essence of all minds. But this substance of minds whirls in different directions at different centres of existence, thus creating differences. This whirling is called the mind, and this way of whirling is called a desire. Therefore, desires differ from person to person, and consequently bodies also appear to be different, as the body is controlled by the mind. With all these distracting characteristics which a person is made up of, he appears to be a whole being, without differences at all. The external ugliness is hidden by the reflection of the inner beauty of the Self. This synthesising nature belongs to consciousness and not to thought. The states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep differ from one another, and yet, a person feels that he alone exists during these three states, without difference. He identifies himself as a single unity in all changes that take place, whether in mind or in body. Waking, dreaming and deep sleep are mental conditions, manifested, slightly manifested and unmanifested. But the Self is neither the manifest nor the unmanifest. It is immutable. It is the General Ground underlying all particulars. Particulars are deviations from the natural

Truth. All particularities are self imposed, i.e., created by the individuals. But the generality of the essence is common to all. Even the particulars have no life and value without this general being, even as a pot has no value without clay.

Samyagdarshana is correct perception of things as they really are. It is a spiritual condition and not an act. It has no concern with the changes that take place in the body and even in the surface-consciousness of the mind. It is, in other words, simple knowing. All objective knowledge breeds birth and death, because knowledge of objects means an underlying desire for objects. We cannot think of anything without having a love for it, positive or negative, and every love is a deviation from the law of Self-Existence. When we love an object, we deny ourselves, or rather, we deceive ourselves, because we, thereby, sell ourselves to that object. Because the object changes itself, and because our love for that object also hunts, after it, and because our love is inseparable from ourselves, we appear to die when the object vanishes, and take rebirth in order to find that object of love. Perception of diversity means moving from death to death, because we are courting thereby self-transformation, due to our desire for identifying ourselves with the diverse forms of objects.

Self-knowledge, therefore, consists in self-identical, immediate, non-relational knowledge. Knowledge, however, cannot be an attribute of the Self. If so, what is the nature of the Self? We cannot say that the Self is other than consciousness, holding that consciousness is its attribute. Else, the Self would be unconsciousness, which, however, is not our experience. The Self is not a substance having

attributes. If consciousness is an attribute of the Self, there would be rise and fall of the knowledge of the Self. It is not possible for us to say what would be the nature of the Self in essence, if it is not consciousness. Without consciousness, it would become a dull substance, ever changing, partitioned, impermanent and impure, which conclusion is, however, illogical.

The theory that the knowledge of the Self is the result of the contact of the Self with the mind is incorrect. This theory reduces the Self to unconsciousness. Several of the declarations of the *srutis* (Upanishads) would be contradicted by this theory. Because the Self is all-pervading, there would be an eternal contact of the Self with the mind, as wherever the mind is, the Self also is. What, then, is the meaning of remembrance and forgetfulness? There would be no forgetfulness at all because of the perpetual contact of the Self with the mind. Moreover, it is wrong to hold that the Self can be in contact with anything, because the Upanishads deny such a possibility. Only a substance with attributes can be in contact with another substance with attributes. The mind has attributes, but the Self has none. Infinity cannot be in contact with perishability. The knowledge of the Self is not the effect of its contact with the mind, as the acceptance of this theory would be to accept that consciousness itself is transient. The Self is eternal knowledge in its very essence. It does not require any contact therefor.

There is another theory which holds that the Self knows itself by itself, by becoming the subject as well as the object. This theory makes the Self perishable, because it divides the

Self into two parts. The Self can never became an object of itself. If it does, it has to die. One thing cannot become another thing unless it dies to that one thing. The Self does not require another consciousness to know itself. Therefore it cannot be said that the Self becomes an object to know itself.

The theory of the Buddhists that the Self is perishable is wrong. According to the Buddhists, the Self is a constantly changing process, and not an existent being. A process is never what it is for more than a moment, and hence every process is transitory. According to this theory the whole existence is a moving shadow, a passing phenomenon without any substance in it. The absurdity of this theory is clear from the fact that no process is possible without an underlying connecting being. There is no flying without an object that is flying. There cannot be mere flying alone. And, also, something flies means something does not fly, viz., the ultimate space. Change implies changelessness. There is becoming means there is being. If the Self is perishable, there must be some imperishable being other than the Self. It is not possible to conceive of perishability except on the basis of imperishability. There must be an eternal, ever-enduring being, so that change or modification may be possible. Therefore, the theory of momentariness of existence propounded by the Buddhists is rejected.

Immortality is the experience of the central existence of the Self. This is possible only after the realisation that the Self is the sole imperishable being. Knowledge is the same as immortality. Liberation from mortal experience does not

mean becoming something other than what we are at present. We can never become what we are not essentially. We have no right to demand what we do not really deserve. We cannot possess what is not ours, and what is ours we can never lose. If we are not immortal now essentially, we can never become that at any time in future, because immortality cannot be created or produced. Anything that is produced is perishable. Eternity cannot be eternity only for some time. There is no such thing as eternity now and eternity afterwards. It is the same in past, present and future. We cannot, therefore, become eternity; we have to realise eternity. We need not strive to possess anything here, because we cannot possess anything perpetually. Anything that is possessed by us shall depart from us sometime or the other. Union is always followed by separation. Nothing of this world is for us a help in our attainment of immortality. The effect of all that is done, created, produced, acted or striven for is perishable. What is imperishable cannot be had through what is perishable. If we get anything, we shall lose it. If we love anything, we shall mourn for it. If we have faith in any object, we shall be deceived by it. If we enjoy anything, we shall suffer for it later on. If we are dependent on anything, we shall have to die for its sake. If we wish to live, we shall have to die, also. This is the law of this world of change. We cannot hope to be happy by being in contact with things. All that we have shall be taken away from us. Smiles of merriment shall result in tears of grief. The earth and the heaven shall collapse. The solar system shall be smashed. Our beloved bodies and our objects shall treacherously desert us, and we

shall be helped by none. Immortality we can attain, therefore, by destroying the sense of possessions, by ceasing from willing, by disconnecting ourselves from external phenomena. Immortality is attained by the Self through itself. What we want, we already have, and what we do not have, we can never get. All struggle for acquisitions shall be frustrated and shall result in the continuous stream of the painful experiences of incessant births and deaths in the rotation of *samsara*. *Atma-tripti*, satisfaction in one's own Self, is the way to Immortality.

Self-realisation is synonymous with the attainment of unlimited spiritual strength. It is the strength born of independence, freedom in the highest sense. Power that is a result of the idea of possession is imaginary. No individual can have real power because of its separation from external objects. Worldly power is only an idea and not a reality. The power vanishes when one is robbed of the possessions. Therefore, there is no permanent power in this world. Even temporarily one's powers in this world are only imaginary, because they depend on the trust which others have in oneself. Phenomenal power cannot overcome death, because even all the phenomena have to die. Death presides over everything that is created. Therefore, death can be overcome only by an uncreated being. This power of deathlessness is ever existent, and no other power is equal to it. This spiritual power cannot be attained through any other means than the Self, which has to be approached through cessation of all functions and not by any amount of striving. Only an eternal being can overcome the process of change and destruction. Therefore, it is said that the Self

cannot be attained by one devoid of strength. It requires the greatest heroism.

Mantra 5

This Self is to be known in this very life. If it is known here, there is meaning for this life. If one does not know it here, great is the loss to such a one. It is possible to realise the Self in this very life itself. It is not necessary to take several future births for this purpose, if only one is able to make the best use of one's life. It is not the length of time for which *sadhana* is practised, but the nature of the intensity with which *sadhana* is practised, that is to be taken into account. It is not the quantity but the quality of *sadhana* that matters. A spark of fire can burn even a mountain of straw. The assiduity with which *sadhana* is carried on is the sole factor that determines the value of that *sadhana*. But the preparation necessary for the actual ultimate process is very great, and it takes practically all the time. It is possible to put an end to the process of the expression of the results of the desires by negating their values and by directing that consequential energy to concentration of consciousness. The failure to practise this kind of energetic endeavour leaves the present and the past actions free to manifest their fruits and thus continue the process of transmigration.

The spiritual hero distinguishes between the truth of the spirit and the untruth of the forms of experience in which it appears to be involved. The lack of interest shown in the forms of thought necessitates the dropping of such forms from one's experience. This independent experience

is called immortality. It is the process of Brahmabhyasa or the practice of the affirmation of the one Reality in every form of experience that can liberate the individual from its individualistic experiences. In other words, it is to feel oneself as the All, to feel that All is centred in one's Self, that is called *brahmabhavana*. This results in the disentanglement of the Self from the notions of 'I-ness' and 'mine-ness', from the relationships and attitudes that bind the individual with its experiences and lock it up in the prison of its notions. There is no hope of the attainment of the highest Divinity as long as one wishes to be this or that, to have this or that experience, to care for some experience or the other. It is a total absorption of oneself, a practical death, as it were, to all the experiences of the earth and the heaven, a ceasing from living, a wanting nothing, an absolute denial of anything, that is presented as an experience internally or externally, that is required of the persevering aspirant after liberation. Knowing and being the Absolute mean the same thing. It is not possible to know it without being it. To live in the universe of experience is to desert the immortal, and to live as the immortal is to abandon the phenomenal experiences. The ardour with which the process has to be undergone is unimaginable. The greater it is, the lesser it should be considered to be. The greater the wisdom, the greater should be the inspiration for deepening that wisdom. The higher one proceeds, the still higher one has to aspire to climb, until there is the uncontradicted experience of Absolute Being. All this is possible through an intense acuteness of the means of approach and an admirable

endeavour that shall break the personality to pieces. It is the Supreme Fulfilment attained though Supreme Negation. It is the burning up of love for the sake of living in the centre of the Absolute, in which love melts into experience. Desires and loves move, they proceed, and do not rest in them selves. But experience is motionless and rests in itself forever. It is the Supreme Death of all, for the sake of Supreme Living.

The Philosophy of Yakshopakhyana

Virtue and vice act as opponents both in the individual body and in the objective universe. The battle between these two is a continuous struggle for the sake of victory of truth over untruth. Virtue is the movement of the ego towards Truth, whether it is through thought, speech or action. Vice, on the other hand, is the process of the affirmation of the ego through self preservation and through self-proclamation. The nearer the ego is to Truth, the greater is the light received by it from Truth. Virtue, therefore, is guided by Divinity. The power of virtue is in fact the power of the Atman within. The power, the greatness and the glory of an individual do not belong to the individual at all. They are borrowed from the Self, and because of this, the individual passes for a great being, though in fact, it is not great. It is pride and conceit that make an individual feel that it is possessed of greatness, knowledge and power. This self assertion has to be dispelled totally before the Divinity can be realised. The story of the Yaksha's appearance is to illustrate the quelling of pride. The quelling of pride is necessary before the

realisation of Divinity. The total cessation of individuality through a dissolution of the ego in knowledge is required before the achievement of Self realisation. Without this, one does not become fit for the glorious experience. In this story, the Yaksha stands for the Supreme Brahman. Agni stands for speech. Vayu stands for *prana* or mind. Indra stands for the ego or the *jiva*. Uma stands for knowledge. But for the sanction of the Great, Divinity Speech and *prana* can do nothing. The mind cannot think; the glorious gods cannot shake a straw. Speech and *prana* are said to have approached the Yaksha or Brahman, but they could not understand that Being. Speech can express, the *prana* can demonstrate, and the mind can think a form or aspect of Truth, an aspect of its manifestation, viz,, the formed being, Yaksha. But the speech, the *prana* and the mind cannot know this Truth. They may show their vanity in trying to comprehend the Truth, but they will miserably fail in their attempt to deal with even the minutest aspect, even a straw, set before them by it. This means to say that even a drop of intuitive knowledge is not given to speech, *prana* or mind. They return baffled by this wonderful Being.

But when Indra, the ego, approaches the Divine Being, it vanishes, i.e., it withdraws the form of its manifestation. It is not possible for the ego to come face to face with the form of the Absolute. It would be like a salt doll entering the ocean. It would not be able to behold any form. Form shall vanish from its sight. Moreover, because the ego is the centre of vanity and pride, the Divinity shall not manifest itself before it. On the other hand, when the ego persists in its attempt to know this Truth, and does not get baffled,

and is very persevering, knowledge shall dawn before it. Knowledge is represented as Uma, because it is the power of the Divine that appears first, and not the Divinity itself. The first experience is not of Divinity but of *sattva*-Guna,

A Guna is a mode of *prakriti*, and, therefore, it is represented as a female, a Sakti, or an expression of the Divine. It is Uma that instructs Indra about the Yaksha in the state of *sattva*, the ego is cleansed of all pride and it comes to know of the nature of the Divine. It is one step below the Divine Experience. When Uma, too, vanishes, i. e., when *sattva*-Guna also is transcended, the real nature of the Yaksha is revealed. There is the realisation of Brahman when all the modes of *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva* are got rid of, in order. In the state of Self-experience the ego is dissolved.

Indra speaks of the knowledge of Brahman to Agni and Vayu. It is experience within through knowledge that transmits itself to speech, mind, etc. The external functions are possible because of inner experience Agni, Vayu and Indra are considered to be the greatest of the gods, because it is not possible for any other of our functions to express the Divine Being even a little; only the speech, the *prana* and the mind or the ego have some relations with the Divine, though these, too, cannot express it completely.

Another instruction that this story gives us is that Brahman does exist. If it does not exist, then, something else must exist. What is that something else? It may be held that the universe or the world exists. Because the universe is a collection of individuals, it means that the individual is real. But this individual is a stress of the ego. If the ego is

real, it must succeed in all its attempts. The very fact that it attempts at something constantly, shows that it is not real. Moreover, the ego is subdued every moment either through external or internal agencies. One day or the other, all the egos shall be smashed. The grief of this world is the experience of the process of the subdual of the ego. It is not necessary that the Divine Being should manifest itself in some huge tremendous form to subdue the ego of a person. It shall manifest itself then and there, without fail, in such a form as is required by a particular kind of egoism. Higher egos require higher powers and lower ones lower powers for the sake of their subjugation. The Divine Being appears to take a form, not because it has a desire to take a form, but because that form of the Divine Being is the one called upon for manifestation by the necessities of the desires which manifest such a form as the counterpart of their egos in order to integrate themselves by getting negated through the agency of that form of manifestation. In other words, every form of experience is the expression of a need felt within.

The failure of the ego to assert its independence indicates that Truth must be a non-ego. Non-ego means infinitude, which posits the existence of the Supreme Brahman. Brahman appears to be comprehended in the realm of speech, thought and action. There is the feeling of knowledge of reality as long as these functions of the individual are carried on happily. This is the meaning of the vision of the Yaksha by Agni and Vayu. But the comprehension of Brahman through these individual functions is only superficial, even as Agni and Vayu can

behold the Yaksha but cannot understand it. When these individual functions are defeated and when they return ashamed, accepting their defeat, i.e., when they do not feel that they are great, and, therefore, cease from further functioning, Indra or the ego starts the investigation of Brahman. But the ego cannot have such superficial knowledge of Brahman, as the other external functions had. When the ego approaches Brahman, there appears to be a loss of all knowledge, the Yaksha disappears from sight. Indra should thoroughly humiliate himself, the ego should perish, if the true nature of the Yaksha is to be revealed. The ego, therefore, merely appears to be less than the other functions. It appears to be not even as fortunate as the other functions who at least had the vision of the Yaksha. But in fact this vanishing of objective knowledge is a precursor to Absolute Knowledge. The process of the dissolution of personality appears like the death of all awareness, though it is the gateway to eternal awareness. The greatest bliss is preceded by the greatest pain. Absolute Unity always follows the destruction of multiplicity and duality. The object of perception should melt away, the Yaksha should vanish, if Brahman is to be realised. The appearance of omniscience is a state midway between individual experience and Absolute Experience, which middle state is represented by the appearance of Uma. It is also to be noted that the Yaksha appears only after that victory of the gods over the Asuras, which means that knowledge is possible only after the victory of virtue over vice, i.e., when the animal propensities are completely subjugated.

The story teaches us that everything is despicable except the knowledge of Brahman. The glory of this world is less than a straw. The greatest of the gods are nothing before the Brahman. Even the king of the gods is nothing before it. The story also shows that it is very difficult to realise Brahman, as even the best of the gods failed in their attempts to comprehend it. It further shows that Agni, Vayu and Indra became great through the knowledge of Brahman alone. *Brahmajnana* is supreme greatness and glory. It is vain to think that any individual has the power to act or to enjoy. It is Brahman that is, and nothing else.

Meditation on Brahman

Brahman is the embodiment of all qualities, powers and existence. It is possible for anyone to obtain anything in any form at any time and at any place, because the substance of everything is everywhere and in every form. With whatever conception of Brahman one may meditate on it, one experiences the form of that conception alone, to the exclusion of everything else. If one meditates on it as Supreme Love, the centre of attraction, adoration and worship, identifying oneself with Brahman, one becomes the object of everybody's love, of all adoration and worship. One who loves Brahman shall be loved by every being of the universe. One who worships it shall be worshipped by all. If one meditates on Brahman as supreme greatness and glory, one shall become supreme and glorious. Whatever attitude we develop towards Brahman, that is repaid to us in manifold forms. The fact is that it is not possible to meditate on Brahman except by identifying oneself with it.

Hence when attitudes are developed towards Brahman in the process of meditation, they are, in fact, developed towards oneself. This is why the meditator experiences whatever he superimposes upon Brahman. The best kind of meditation, however, is not to conceive of Brahman as having any quality at all, i.e., to negate all qualities that the mind thinks of. Qualities limit Brahman, and we get only what we think. The negation of qualities, however, discloses Truth as it is in itself, and the meditator becomes Brahman itself.

Meditation on Brahman is an attempt to become the Self of all beings. This is the reason why a lover of and a meditator on Brahman becomes the centre of adoration and worship. Every being loves itself the most and adores and worships itself as the best and the dearest. And since this dearest Self is reflected through a lover of Brahman, he becomes the dearest and the most adorable of all. One can relate oneself to anything and can know anything in the best possible way only when one becomes that thing. Therefore, meditation on Brahman is the effort towards obtaining and becoming everything, i. e., achieving the highest perfection in the Supreme Absolute.

KATHOPANISHAD

Introduction

The path to perfection can be trodden only after one's encountering several threats and temptations. The example of Nachiketas shows that he was even cursed to death and was tempted severely in his attempt at adhering to righteousness and truth of the spirit. In the process of the search for Truth, the subjective propensities and objective tendencies show their heads in concrete forms and either tempt or threaten the aspirant. For an aspirant of weak will, advanced spiritual practices are very near impossibility. A person believes in what he sees and experiences and not in what he does not see and does not experience. He has love for certain things and fear for certain others, because he has faith in the value of those things, as they are the objects of his direct experience. He, however, does not believe in super-sensuous realities, because they are not the objects of his direct experience. Love for comforts and hatred for pain and sorrow pull the aspirant from two opposite sides, and he is left at sea. It is here that the strong weapon of will and discrimination should come for one's help. One has to clear the way in the midst of these oppositions that are inevitable in one's struggle for transcending one's individuality in the Absolute. The individual modes try their best to persist in appearing again and again, and to bar the gate to Truth. It is hard to recognise the faces of these thieves in the form of friends, who deceive the aspirant every moment and frustrate all his aspirations. The objects and states of every plane of consciousness have to be rejected, as they are objective, and one has to resort to the Infinite Subject

which is divisionless fullness. One should realise that anything that is achieved as the result of desires and actions shall vanish one day or the other, and that the only thing ever enduring and worth knowing is the one Self in all. Nachiketas persisted in his aspiration for Truth, in spite of the most formidable temptations, and in spite of the refusal of Yama to impart knowledge to him. Finally, Yama initiates him into the mysteries of the Self.

The Good and the Pleasant

The good is one thing and the pleasant is another thing. They have different aims, and they drag a person from different directions. Of these two, he who chooses the good obtains blessedness, but he who chooses the pleasant falls from his aim, The good is that which leads one to God or the Absolute. It gives the freedom of *moksha* or liberation from *samsara*. It is not pleasant, because it is against body-consciousness. It destroys what is pleasant and, hence, is rather painful. The pleasant, on the other hand, is intimately connected with the body, and prevents a person from choosing the good. One falls down from one's aim if one chooses the pleasant, because one shall never be able to possess the pleasant objects for ever, and also, these objects are false appearances and not real existences. All pleasant things shall vanish, and only the good shall remain. One cannot pursue the good and the pleasant at the same time, even as light and darkness cannot be perceived in the same place. One who chooses the good should reject the pleasant and take refuge in the super-mundane Truth, though it is invisible. The good does not come quickly, though the

pleasant may do so. The Real is the unseen. One who pursues this Real attains the blessed state of eternity, but that short-sighted and dull-witted person who pursues the pleasant is separated from the objects of his desire, and he shall mourn for their death and take birth for their sake.

Both the good and the pleasant come to a person. But the wise man discriminates between two. The wise one prefers the good to the pleasant, and the stupid one chooses the pleasant for the sake of protecting and fattening the body. All run after the pleasant alone and not after the good, because the pleasant is connected with the present limited life. The good is not longed for, because it is trans-empirical. The good and the pleasant are opposite to one another, like the two opposite poles. One cuts the tree of *samsara*, and the other waters the tree of *samsara*. Those who justify sense-enjoyments are blind men guided by blind philosophies and they shall fall into deep pits. All enjoyments are more frictions of nerves. They do not merely bring pain but are the very forms of misery itself. A sensation cannot be called bliss, and all worldly experiences are sensations. Those who believe in the reality of this present world alone and do not care for the existence of another plane of life get attached to this world, and, thus, have to experience births and deaths.

The Nature of the Self

The Atman, being the presupposition of all acts of understanding, feeling and willing, is not known to any individualised knower, and so it appears as a terrible mystery, a wonder of wonders, awe-inspiring. To many this

Atman is difficult to hear of, to many others, even when heard of, it is difficult to understand. Wonderful is the teacher of this; blessed is the obtainer of this; wonderful is the knower of this, who is taught by a blessed teacher. This Atman cannot be known if it is taught by an inferior teacher, even if it is thought of in various ways. Only when the Atman is taught by one who is identical with the Atman (i.e., a *brahmanishta*), it can be known, because the Atman is subtler than the subtlest and does not come under any of the logical categories. This Atman cannot be known through logic, but it can be known when it is instructed about by one who has realised it. The wealth of the universe, its resources and powers are insufficient as means to the realisation of the Atman, for the permanent is not reached by the impermanent. The Atman is reached when the whole universe with its contents is abandoned. Even the source of the highest happiness, the basis of the world, the end of all desires, the state of fearlessness, the praiseworthy great being, viz., Hiranyagarbha, is not worth having. Rejecting all these, that Atman which is very difficult to know, which is seated in the innermost cavity of the heart, the attainment of which is attended with great dangers, should be known by abstracting the senses and the mind from their respective objects and resolving this energy into Self-consciousness. Knowing this self luminous being, the hero casts off both joy and grief. He rejoices in the bliss of the Self, because he has attained the highest object of attainment through hearing, understanding and contemplation of this subtle Truth. It is different from what is done and what is not done, different from past and

future, and is of the nature of immediate knowledge. All the Vedas speak of the glory of this. All penances point to the greatness of this. All observe continence for the attainment of this. This supreme state is denoted by the word OM. This is the Supreme Absolute. After knowing this, whatever one wishes for becomes one's own. This is the supreme support; knowing this support, one glories in the region of the Absolute.

This omniscient Atman is not born, nor does it die. It has not come from anywhere and it has not become anything. Unborn, eternal, perpetual and ancient, this Atman is not killed when the body is killed. Birth is the process of the production of an effect from a cause, and, hence, it is the process of transient becoming. For the same reason death also is a process. The processes of birth, life and death are impermanent and, therefore, they are denied in the Atman. Ceaseless consciousness is free from all kinds of change, change is the character of phantasmal presentations. Changelessness is the nature of the Atman. This Atman does not come from anywhere, and it .as not become anything else, because coming and becoming are, again, transient processes. It has not ceased to be itself. It does not decay or suffer diminution. It is the most ancient and the newest of all. An object becomes new when its constituents are charged and set in a different condition. The Atman exists even prior to and later than the newest of objects. It exists together with everything, and also after everything. Nothing newer and other than the Atman can ever be produced. In other words, Atman is whatever is, was and will be. Hence, it is indestructible, it neither kills

anyone nor is killed. It suffers from nothing, because it is like ether. It is free from the experiences of *samsara*. It is bodiless, and hence relationless. Non-becoming or changelessness is the one character which denies of the Atman all phenomenal natures. The Atman is subtler than the subtlest and larger than the largest. It is situated as the central being of all. Free from thought and action, one beholds it through the cessation of distraction and attainment of tranquillity and becoming sorrowless, rejoices in the glory of the Atman. It is the subtlest of all, because it is the Self of all. It is the largest, because it is limitless. It is possible to know it through the practice of hearing, contemplation and meditation, after getting oneself freed from desires and actions, and separating oneself from objects, seen as well as heard of. As long as the mind shakes and the body gets agitated, it is not possible for one to know this Atman. Perfect satiety of the mind, the senses and the body is absolutely necessary before the attempt at the vision of the Self. Those who have got desires and passions are prevented from the realisation of the Self.

The Atman, lying down, goes everywhere. Sitting, it moves far. It is the bodiless among all bodies; it is the permanent among the impermanent. It is the great omnipresent being, knowing which the hero does not grieve. It is not possible to know this Atman through debate, intellectuality and much study. It is attained through a relationless immediate method in which the Self is both the subject and the object of attainment. One who has not ceased from bad conduct, who is restless, whose mind is wandering, who has no peace within, cannot know

the Atman through any amount of thinking. The Atman is beyond all knowledge and power conceivable in the world. Death itself is swallowed in it, and all processes are put an end to.

The Soul and Its Chariot

The conscious principle within is the lord of the chariot. The body is the chariot, the intellect is the charioteer or the driver, the mind is the rein, the senses are the horses, the objects of the senses are the roads. This chariot is useful either to drive down or drive up. The body is dragged by the horses of the senses in different directions. The driver is responsible for the movement of the chariot, and this is the intellect, which can either understand or misunderstand, and consequently either ascend with the chariot to the Abode of Vishnu or fall down to the mortal state. Whatever is done through this body consciously, is done, ultimately, by the intellect. It is the principle of egoism, desire, activity, birth and death. It is the factor that brings pain and pleasure, unity and separation. The doer of the enjoyer is a strange mixture of consciousness, mind and the senses, because, independently, none of them can be either a doer or an enjoyer. This shows that doership and enjoyership are illusory; their constituents have no independent existence. The knowledge of this chariot and its contents is to be obtained before attempting to drive the chariot. One whose intellect is bad and uncontrolled, and whose mind is weak and impure, cannot control the horses of the senses, and they will run riot in different directions. He does not attain to the Supreme, but enters *samsara*. One whose intellect is

steady and brilliant, and whose mind is strong and pure, can control the horses of the senses, and drive the chariot to the supreme state of Vishnu, and is never born again, having reached the Highest Consummation of life.

The Gradation of the Categories

The objects of the senses are grosser than the senses, which, again, are grosser than the subtle rudimentary principles that actuate the senses. The subject that is characterised by the senses is always superior to the object that is bereft of consciousness, because the subject is subtler than the object. Only that which is subtle can pervade and comprehend what is gross. The mind, however, is subtler than even the subtle principles that preside over the senses, because the mind is the synthesising agent and the real operator of diverse sense functions. The mind is nearest to consciousness and, hence, it has the greatest power over all that is an effect and that which is inferior to the mind in subtlety. The mind is naturally fickle in character, and hence, it is not useful to the individual in acts like steady knowledge of anything. The intellect is subtler than the mind, and it is free from the fickleness that the mind is infected with. Intelligence in its aspect of determination is found only in the Buddhi or the intellect. The highest faculty of knowledge in the individual is the intellect.

The intellect, however, has certain defects, in spite of its being the most precious possession of an individual. The intellect always functions on a dualistic basis. It can have no knowledge except by connecting the subject with the object. Unfortunately, contact is not the way of acquiring perfect

knowledge of anything. This means that the intellect cannot have perfect knowledge, unless it ceases from working on the basis of duality. With duality there is no real knowledge and without quality there is no intellect at all. Therefore, perfect and complete knowledge, is not given to the human being. It is only the cosmic intelligence or the *mahat-tattva* that can have complete knowledge, because it is free from the perception of duality. It is the collective totality of all principles of intelligence in the universe, and, therefore, outside it there is nothing. The cosmic intellect is not the understander of anything external to it. But it knows Itself as complete in Itself. Therefore, the *mahat* is superior to the individual intellect. The *mahat-tattva* is characterised by omniscience, and omniscience necessitates the acceptance of a cause of omniscience. This cause of even the *mahat-tattva* is called the *avyakta* which is superior to the *mahat*. The cosmic intellect exists buried in a potential condition in this *avyakta*. In fact, the *avyakta* is not an existent something but only the possibility and the explanation of the appearance of the Absolute as cosmic intelligence. Superior to the *avyakta* is the *purusha*. The *purusha* is the same as Brahman, beyond which there is nothing. This is the Supreme Goal.

The *purusha* is described as the supreme destination of all the individuals. The word destination may give rise to a doubt that it is possible for one to move towards the *purusha*, even as a person may move towards a town or a village. In the case of movement towards a place, destination has its literal meaning, but, in the case of the attainment of the *purusha*, it has only a figurative meaning.

The *purusha* that is to be attained is not different from the one who attains it. It is the knowledge of the Self that is signified by the word destination. Movement is an action, and knowledge is not action; because in movement we have to do something, but in knowledge, we have to do nothing. A literal movement towards the *purusha* is not possible, because external to the *purusha* there is nothing. Movement is the function of the *pranas*, the senses, the mind and the intellect. But knowledge is not the property of any of these. Hence knowledge is different from movement or any kind of action. If one can go to or move towards anything, one can also come back from that. Action always implies reaction. But the Srutis declare that there is no return to mortal experience after the attainment of the *purusha*. This shows that the attainment of the *purusha* is the same as existence which is eternal, and not an act which is temporary. The *sruti* says, "They go by the pathless path," which means that the path to perfection is not like a lengthy road situated in space but a state of consciousness within. It is quite obvious that one cannot have the awareness of oneself through any amount of external struggle, even as a sleeping person cannot know himself except by waking into consciousness.

This Atman is subtler than every conceptual being. Therefore, it does not shine before the organs of know ledge. The cognitive organs can know only what is grosser than themselves and not what is subtler. This Atman is beheld only by the subtlest condition of the intellect. viz., the steady intelligence of a *sattvika* character in which alone the consciousness of the Self can be reflected. The Atman is

known only by the most careful seers who have the subtlest sense of perception and the most acute and penetrating intelligence freed from the shackles of desires and actions. In fact, even the principle of the creator of the universe himself is an object when compared to the Brahman-consciousness, and therefore, even the creator is less than Brahman. The knowers of the Atman constitute only a minority of the individuals, because of the difficulty of the transfiguration of oneself from mortal experience in the world to non-relational Absolute-Experience. The principle that is nearest in subtlety to the Atman knows it the best and those that are subtler know it better. The senses have got the least knowledge of the Atman. The mind has got the least knowledge of it. The intellect knows it still better. The cosmic intellect supersedes even the ordinary intellect in knowledge. It is the cosmic intellect that has got omniscience, because of freedom from the obstructions of objectivity. The state transcending omniscience is the Absolute or Brahman.

The Process of Withdrawal

The energy that is spent by the senses should be conserved through the stoppage of the activity of the senses. When the senses are stopped from their functions, there is a natural revolt of the senses, as a reaction to the attempt at their subdual. The reason for this revolt is that the energy that is withdrawn from the senses is not utilised well. No energy can rest in suspension, without being used; it shall find a way out. Hence the totality of sense-energy should be dissolved in the mind, so that there may not be any chance

or possibility of its being expressed once again through the senses. But the mind also being an organ that is an extrovert in nature may project itself again through the senses, if the energy is allowed to stay in the mind without being utilised for a purpose. Generally forced stoppage of sense-activity without proper discrimination results in nervousness, excitement, confusion and ultimately a kind of madness. For this reason the energy of the mind should be spent in the process of purifying it and transforming it into the purity of intelligence. The character of intelligence is not dynamic energy, but unruffled consciousness. Consciousness does not require itself to be spent out, because there is nothing subtler than consciousness. But, when the mental energy is transformed into the intellect, it remains in the individual in the form of a dynamic power. Power is always objective and is always in motion. Power cannot rest in itself and so forces itself out in some way or the other. Therefore, the intellectual energy should be reduced to universal consciousness or *mahat*, where there is no danger of power getting itself externalised. This *mahat* should further be reduced to the *shanta*-Atman or the Absolute Self that is free from even the very possibility of objective consciousness. This is the ultimate goal. The drift of the whole statement is that all ideas, names and forms, actions and their results, have to be resolved into the peaceful Self, through the knowledge of its Absoluteness.

The Path of the Seeker

The *sruti* says, "Arise, Awake! Through obtaining men of wisdom, know it. A sharpened edge of a razor, hard to

tread, a difficult path it is, - thus sages declare." The individuals of the universe are all sleeping persons or dreamers in the night of ignorance. They are exhorted to wake up to the day of knowledge. The path of *sadhana* is beset with great dangers. The *sadhaka* has to experience sorrows and very unpleasant conditions in the process of the transformation of the individual into the Supreme. Knowledge arises, in the beginning, not through more self effort but through the company of the wise, the result of which is accelerated by the effects of past meritorious deeds. Self-effort takes the form of an intellectual undertaking, and the intellect being very strongly influenced by internal convictions and experiences of the individual concerned, the effort is many times not well directed. Every right effort should be preceded by right thinking, and no right thinking is possible as long as the individual is controlled by personal prejudices and desires. Hence the need for the company of the wise, which shall break open the fort of preconceived notions in the individual. Further, the path is a very difficult one to tread. The search for truth is attended with many dangers. The *sadhaka* is likely to be tempted, opposed, misled or held up on the way. The inner propensities take concrete forms and present themselves before the seeker because of his attempt at concentration of mind. Concentration is a death-blow given to mental desires, and hence they rise up with all might to put an end to the practice of concentration. Moreover, *sadhana* is the method of the disintegration of the entire personality consisting of the five material sheaths. These sheaths include within themselves the substance of

the entire universe. Therefore, when the aspirant turns his face against these sheaths, he is actually acting against the lower natural current of the whole external universe of manifestation. Here lies the danger of the practice. The objective powers of the universe rebel against the internal consciousness, and though this consciousness is more powerful than any objective power, it does not appear to be so because of its non-manifestation. The aspirant seems to be defeated, because his condition is one where the external tendencies are opposed and the internal Self is not known. Hence, he has no help until a higher state is reached, though he is unconsciously being led higher by the law of the Absolute. It is in this helpless condition of the absence of knowledge that the power of the result of previous discriminative practices raises the individual above the material entanglements. The object of knowledge is too subtle to be easily known, and the object of the senses is too gross to be easily avoided. This is the reason why there is every likelihood of the seeker's falling back into relative experience. But there is one great helping hand that pushes forward every *sadhaka*, in spite of the several oppositions before him. Every bit of action that is done as a *sadhana* for perfection produces such a power that it can never be destroyed by any material force of the universe. When a *sadhaka* is opposed by an external power, the impression of the previous practice urges him forward, and this forward march is another act which adds another fresh stock of power to the already existing one. Every step taken forward adds more power to the previous stock, and the cumulative effect of *sadhana-shakti* becomes so great that it is able to

overcome any external power. The subject is always more powerful than the object, because the subject is conscious and is the influencer of the object. The knower has a power over the known. The fact that the knower has the power to know the entirety of nature shows that nature is subservient to the knower. If the knower were less than the known, it would never have been possible for the knower to have complete knowledge of anything. Knowledge of everything means transcending everything in quality as well as in quantity. The path to perfection is, therefore, the way to the expansion of the localised being into the limitless existence. Since every being is essentially consciousness, it is possible for everyone to become the greatest and the best, and exist as the Absolute.

The Liberation of the Individual

When that which is soundless, touchless, formless, changeless, tasteless, eternal, odourless, beginningless, endless, greater than the cosmic intellect, the permanent being, is known, one is liberated from the mouth of death.

That which is characterised by qualities like sound has to modify itself, because these qualities are not absolute values, but valid only relatively. That which is not absolutely valid cannot exist eternally. All relative values serve a purpose only in relation to particular times and conditions. That which is ever enduring does not exist in relation to another thing or condition, but is self-sufficient. That which has no beginning may have an end, and that which has no end may have a beginning. But Brahman is beginningless and endless. That which has a beginning is a

product, and every product, being conditioned by its cause, is limited. It has to resolve itself into its cause, because the effect cannot have a nature different from that of its cause. But that which is beginningless and endless is neither a cause nor an effect. Hence, it is transcendentally real. The Atman is *kootastha-nitya*, eternally real, as distinct from the elements which are *parinami-nitya* or changefully real. By knowing such Atman, as being identical with one's own Self, one gets liberated from the jaws of death. Death consists in the presence of *avidya*, *kama* and *karma* within. *Avidya* is the cause of *kama* and *kama* is the cause of *karma*. *Karma* is the cause of birth and death. Hence, death is situated within, and not without. The cause of change that gives rise to birth and death and different experiences in life is present in the mind in the form of the necessity to transform oneself into another condition. The fact that there is imperfect knowledge, imperfect power and imperfect joy in an individual, shows that perfection can be attained only by transcending this imperfect condition. This process of transcending oneself is called change and death. It is not possible to become unlimitedly perfect as long as the consciousness of limitedness is not negated. Deaths, therefore, are the processes of purification of the soul for immortality.

Sense-Control

The senses are always projected outward to their respective objects. Therefore, no individual has consciousness of the Self. By aspiring for immortality and turning the consciousness to itself within, the Atman is

beheld. It is not possible to have at the same time the consciousness of both the subject and the object. The subject can know itself only when it does not know the object. When the object is known fully, the subject is entirely forgotten. Because true bliss is found in the subject alone, this bliss is, never experienced as long as the subject is not known, i.e., as long as there is consciousness of an object. The whole universe is not an object of the Subject that is Consciousness. Self-realisation, therefore, is the absorption of the consciousness, of objectivity into Simple Consciousness not infected by thought or affected by any object. The doors of the senses and the intellect have to be closed if the light is to be beheld within. The light of the Self is dissipated ordinarily because of external consciousness. These rays of consciousness should be collected and centred in one thought or one idea of one nature. This practice puts an end to external awareness and makes the mind break its boundaries and expand itself beyond the limitations of causation. Further, when concentration is practised, all *rajas* is put an end to, and there is the revelation of *sattva* through which the bliss of Truth is reflected. Bliss always comes after knowledge, and knowledge is always accompanied by power. This means that meditation is the way to perfect, knowledge, power and bliss, which know no decay.

Since it is evident that worldly consciousness and Divine Consciousness do not co-exist, it is also clear that sensuality is the opposite of Self-knowledge. Sense knowledge is natural to the individual, whereas Self-knowledge is extra-ordinary. This is the reason why

everyone is by force made to experience the Anatman or something objective. They are children who follow the course of the objects of the senses. They fall into the widespread net of destruction. Those who have consciousness of the Immortal do not ever seek it among things impermanent. The cause of destruction or death is widespread, i.e., it is everywhere. The meaning is that the outward conditions necessary for the destruction of something are made manifest by the corresponding conditions in the thing to be destroyed. Since all desires are connected with their respective objects and not with the entire existence, it is not possible for one who desires, to escape death. Death is the process of the extension of one's consciousness by casting off the obstructing factors, viz., limited experiences. The spiritual heroes do not find Reality among shadows, because the Infinite Subject, viz., the Atman, never becomes an object of itself. This Self does neither increase by good action nor decrease by bad action. Its glory is eternal, because it is independent of all externals. The wise ones, therefore, have no desire for anything at all, for they do not find anything as valuable as their own essential consciousness. They experience every objective condition as an intense opposition to what is absolutely Real, and cast it off as pain. In short, absorption into the Self is the same as absence of sense-experience and the negation of thought in pure awareness.

The Self has the knowledge of every kind of existence. This knowledge, however, is not the pain-giving temporary knowledge acquired through contact, but the knowledge of every fibre of being, in essence. Every constituent of

existence is known by it in the most perfect manner, because all these constituents are parts of itself alone. Its knowledge is knowledge of itself, and is not separative knowledge that is possible only in terms of space, time and causation. Hence the Self is omniscient and, therefore, absolutely perfect.

Whatever is here is there, and whatever is there is here. He goes from death to death, who perceives diversity here. The substance of immediate existence is the same as that of remote existence. Persons move from place to place in search of things, because of the ignorance of the fact that everything can be found everywhere. The different forms of experience do not mean that they are really different. These differences belong to the cognitive organs or the modes of knowledge, and not to the objects of knowledge. The whole universe of creation is a gradual unfoldment of one substance alone. Through meditation on this Reality of oneness of substance, it is possible for one to actualise or make manifest anything, at any place, in any form. Truly, there is no diversity here. Those who perceive diversity due to the defects of the inner organs experience birth and death, as they have to conform to what they believe in. What one intensely believes in, that one experiences, because every belief pertains to an aspect of reality. But because individual beliefs are partial, the experiences corresponding to these, too, are partial. This is the reason, why desirers or perceivers of quality and multiplicity do not have absolute experience, but are caught in the meshes of the effects of their own desires. Meditation should, therefore, be practised in the form of the affirmation of the

divisionless being which is full, and which includes everything. This is the same as meditation on one's own Self.

Even as water that is dropped by rain on the top of a mountain runs here and there, and is wasted, one who perceives manifoldness and follows different paths runs to waste with them. But, even as pure water poured into pure water becomes pure water alone, the sage who knows the Self as one whole being becomes the whole being itself, without dissipating his energy. Whenever there is thought of something, at once energy is sent, to that thing, whereby the energy is spent out. Weakness and distraction are caused by spending out energy in contemplation of external objects and states. But, true withdrawal of thinking of externals means complete conservation of energy and the dissolution of itself in Self-consciousness. The mind should not be allowed to follow diverse methods of practice, as, thereby, it distracts itself and attains nothing substantially. But, when it follows one method of practice, concerned with one goal, and concentrates itself completely on this goal, it integrates itself and becomes identical with the Absolute.

A person does not live by *prana* or *apana*, but he lives by something on which *prana* and *apana*, also, depend. The *pranas* serve a purpose to another of which they are auxiliaries. They are made up of parts, they are inert, they are actuated by another conscious principle. A person lives by the conscious Spirit within. The *pranas* move the senses, because they themselves are moved by the internal consciousness. This means that all life belongs to the

Atman, and all values also belong to it. Even as fire which has got only one form appears in form corresponding to the media through which it burns, this Atman, which is one, appears in form corresponding to the form through which it manifests. Even as the sun who is the eye of all is not sullied by the defects of the eye, the one Atman, the Self of all, is not sullied by the defects of the world, because it is transcendental and unconnected with objective experiences. The Atman, the controller of all, the Self of all, is really the essence of all the diverse forms of existence. Happiness belongs to those who realise the Self within themselves, not to anybody else, who is busy with the externals. The peace belonging to those is eternal, who realise the Self within, the eternal among all impermanent beings, the one consciousness beyond all ordinary consciousness, and the one goal of all aspirations and desires. Peace does not belong to anyone else. The sun does not shine there, nor the moon and the stars; these lightnings, too do not shine; what to speak of this fire! Everything shines after Him who shines. This who1e universe is illuminated by His Light.

The Tree of Samsara

The tree of life has its root upwards in the unmanifest, which is rooted in the Divine Being; its branches spread below as the manifested universe. This tree is inclusive of great miseries like birth, old age, grief and death. It appears to be of a different nature every moment. It is now seen and now not seen, like a jugglery or water in the mirage, or the city of the clouds. It can be felled down like a tree, and it

has got a beginning and an end like a tree. It is essenceless like the sapless plantain tree. It is the cause of great doubts and confusions in the minds of the non-discriminating. Its true nature is not ascertained even by aspirants after knowledge. Its true meaning is found in the original essence of Brahman which is ascertained in the Vedanta-Shastra. This tree has grown out of the potency of ignorance, desire and action. It has grown out of the sprout of Hiranyagarbha, who combines in himself cosmic knowledge and action. The branches of this tree consist of the various subtle bodies of the individuals. It has a proud stature through being watered by the desires and cravings of the individuals. Its buds consist of the objects of the mind and the senses. Its leaves consist of the knowledge that is got from scripture, tradition, logic and learning. It has the flowers of the impulses for sacrifice, charity, austerity, etc. Its essence is the experience of pleasure and pain. Its root is fastened tightly, because of the constant watering through the intense longings for the different objects on which all individuals depend. It is inhabited by several birds called individuals from Brahma down to inanimate matter. It is full of tumultuous noises like those of weeping, shouting, playing, joking, singing dancing, busily running, and such other sounds created by the experiences of exhilaration and grief, giving rise to pleasure and pain. This tree can be cut down with the strong weapon of detachment consequent upon the realisation of the identity of the Self with Brahman, through hearing of the Vedanta texts, contemplating upon their meaning and profound meditation thereon. This tree shakes, being

blown by the wind of various desires and actions of the individuals. Its various parts are the different worlds inhabited by celestial beings, human beings, beasts, demons, etc. The beginning of this tree is not known. It extends every where and its form is incomprehensible. This tree is ultimately based on the pure essence of self-luminous consciousness. The enigmatic character of this tree is accounted for by the incomprehensible nature of Brahman in which it is rooted. This tree is essentially unreal, because it is experienced as a modification. The *sruti* says that all modification is only a play of speech, a mere name, and therefore false. This Brahman which is the reality behind this universal tree is transcended by nothing, and other than it there is no reality. This whole universe works systematically, being controlled by the Supreme Life-Principle, viz., Brahman. This Brahman is like a great terror, like an uplifted thunderbolt, because none can transgress its law. Its rule is relentless, and anyone who tries to go against the Law of the Absolute reaps intense sorrow. But, those who know the Truth of Brahman become Immortal. Through fear of this Supreme Being fire burns; through fear the sun shines; through fear Indra and Vayu perform their functions; through fear death does its duty. Fire, sun and the other principles of the universe, including the process of change and death, are the different phases of the aspects of the one Brahman. Hence, they all are united in its self-identical nature which never ceases to be. It is not possible for any individual to live according to its personal inclinations without obeying the Law of the Infinite. A part cannot exist independent of the whole. The part always

should and does partake of the nature of the whole. Hence, everyone is controlled by this whole, viz., Brahman.

If knowledge rises in a person before the death of this body, he shall attain Liberation and will not be born again. Rebirth is the result of the absence of Self-knowledge and the presence of desire at the time of casting off the physical body. Therefore, this Atman has to be realised in this life itself, so that the pain of another life may be put an end to. Among all the different regions of existence, the human region is the best suited for the purpose of the attainment of Self-knowledge. No doubt, the region of the creator is better than the human region and is nearest to Brahman-knowledge, but the individual has to spend a very long time in its attempt to reach the region of the creator and then to acquire Self-knowledge. In the human world, the Self is experienced as something like a reflection of an object in a mirror. But in the region of the creator, the distinction experienced between the true Self and the phenomenal self is like that between light and darkness. Therefore, here one has the highest empirical experience. But, in other worlds, the attainment of Self-knowledge is not possible, because the inhabitants there are either absolutely devoid of knowledge or engrossed in external enjoyment or sunk in great grief, or not possessed of the required instruments for effort towards Self-realisation. The human being, therefore, should try to attain Self knowledge here itself, and not after going to another region.

The Practice of Yoga

This Atman is not seen through the eyes, nor is it perceived through any of the other senses, as it never becomes an object of itself. It is known only when the centre of personality is dissolved through the absorption of the factors causing individuality, viz., the mind and the intellect, into the Atman. Equanimity of inner vision is the same as spiritual knowledge, and it cannot be had as long as the mind and the intellect function in their own fashion. The Atman cannot be sought for in external conditions, but it can be known and realised only through reverting from externals to the internal being. It is this introversion that enables one to enter into the very substance of being. This state of spiritual equilibrium is attained when the five senses of knowledge rest together with the mind, and when the intellect does not perform its functions of objective knowledge. Yoga consists in the withholding of all individual functions, beginning from the physical body and ending in the intellect, and the directing of the whole energy to the apperception of consciousness and making it rest in itself, in the state of perfection and motionlessness. Yoga and *jnana* differ from one another in the sense that the former is the negative process of the annihilation of personal consciousness, whereas the latter is the positive realisation and experience of infinite consciousness. In a general sense, yoga may include *jnana* also, if yoga is taken to mean the method of the attainment of the Supreme. In the practice of yoga one should become very vigilant, and should not become proud or heedless. Yoga comes and goes. It does not rest for long, unless great care is taken in

the maintenance of that consciousness of Oneness. Yoga is the separation from contact with pain. In this state, the powers working through the external senses and the internal senses are made to go back to their source, viz., the power of Self-consciousness, where they rest in perfect peace. The noise of the senses ceases, and as a consequence of this, pain and sorrow also are negated.

Brahman should be conceived of as existence, between the two logical conceptions of existence and non-existence. Existence is the correlative of non-existence, and, hence, even non-existence may appear to have as much validity as existence. But the conception of non-existence, though logically deducible, is practically impossible, as the conception of Brahman as non-existence involves the negation of the consciousness of one's own existence also. Therefore, Brahman should be known as existence, though, from the highest standpoint, it too, is a limited conception. As for as the human being is concerned, the conception of existence is not limited in the ordinary way, because, it is not possible to set boundaries to existence. The idea of existence leads to the realisation of the transcendental Truth that includes and goes beyond the ideas of existence and non-existence.

When all the desires that are lodged in the heart are cast off, the mortal experiences the Immortal, and it becomes Brahman, here itself. *Moksha* is the realisation of that which exists always and everywhere. Therefore, it can be realised at any place, provided the obstructions to this realisation are removed. These obstructions are called desires for objective experience. Removal of desires means the same as

the destruction of the mind. The realisation of the Self does not involve a movement towards any external condition, but it is the extinction and transcendence of personality in the Absolute. It is like a drop dissolving in the ocean, or rather the ocean itself becoming aware that it is ocean.

The Yoga Vasishtha makes reference to two methods of overcoming and transcending the mind, which is the stuff of individuality; - yoga and *jnana*. Vasishtha defines yoga as *vrittinirodha* and *jnana* as *samyagavekshana*. Generally, yoga is to be understood in the sense of that Integral Method whereby the individual is attuned to the Supreme Being. It is neither a creed nor a tradition, but the law governing the entire universe, and made manifest in the conscious activity of the individual. Yoga is really the process of the evolution of the finite to the Infinite, consciously and deliberately systematised, and thus accelerated. In yoga, the experiences of several future possible lives are compressed into those of one life or the least possible number of lives. Yoga is, therefore, nothing out-of-the-way or unconnected with the normal life of man. Truly, it is the only normal life, and a life bereft of the consciousness of yoga, in some degree at least, may be said to be below the normal. To be forced to be something and to act in certain ways, instinctively, without the conscious and volitional activity of oneself, is not the glory of man. Yoga is to know the real relation which man bears to the universe as a whole, and to the Divine Being which is his Higher Self. Not to know this relation is to grope blindly in darkness and to be merely confined to the animal consciousness of sub-human beings. Yoga is not cutting

oneself away from the reality of life in the world, but it is the understanding and realisation of the real meaning of existence in order to live a life of the essential freedom and bliss of one's deepest consciousness. In other words, it is to be a friend and citizen of the whole universe, to feel oneself in all beings, to absorb into oneself the whole constitution of the universe, to be the Soul of the universe. This is the meaning of yoga, understood in its general sense.

But yoga has also a special and particularised meaning, as mentioned by Vasishtha. This is identical with the technical Yoga System of Patanjali. It consists in the inhibition of all the modifications of the mind-stuff, by force of will. In this system, the faculty that plays the most important part is the will, not so much the understanding or the feeling. By sheer dint of determination and decision based on faith in the holy tradition and the instructions of the teacher, one fixes one's consciousness on the ideal of one's attainment. All *vrittis* or psychoses are resolutely banished from consciousness by resort to various methods, such as thinking of the opposite of the obstructing psychosis, cultivation of virtuous qualities, practice of the abandonment of all objects and enjoyments, both seen and heard, complete restraint of the senses, fast, continence, positive love for all beings, truth speaking, non-covetousness, cleanliness of body and of internal motive, contentment with what one obtains independent of effort, austerity, study of sacred scriptures, recitation of the Name of God, prayer, self-surrender, steady posture of the body, harmonisation of the vital energy, etc. By these methods the Yogi withdraws his senses from their respective objects, and

concentrates his mind on the Supreme Being. Before the attainment of actual concentration on God, one may pass through various lower stages of concentration of grosser objects that are more easily comprehended and taken as means of steadying the activities of the mind. Thus, with a negative method of abstraction of the functions of individuality, one attains That which is at the background of all individual functions.

Jnana is *samyagavekshana* or right vision of things. It is to behold the world as it is really, not merely as it appears to the individual functions of knowledge. It is to fix the consciousness on the Universal Substance, of which all things are made. *Jnana* is the knowledge that the Self is the All, and that the All is the Self. This Self is not the individual subject of knowledge, but the Self of the whole universe, the Consciousness to which the whole universe can be reduced. *Jnana* is to experience nothing objective, nothing external to one's consciousness and to have the direct realisation of Eternity and Infinity. *jnana* is the constant awareness of the Immortal Brahman. This awareness has an empirical as well as an absolute aspect. Empirically, it is called *brahmabhavana* or *brahmabhyasa*, which consists in ceaselessly thinking of and feeling the presence of Brahman alone, speaking about Brahman alone, discoursing with one another on Brahman alone, and totally resting in the consciousness of Brahman alone, in all activities of life. In its absolute aspect, it is to be merged in Brahman, to be in the state of perpetual *samadhi* or *kaivalya* to be perfectly free from the consciousness of a second to oneself, to glory in the Absolute, and to be

supremely blessed. This latter stage follows the former logically, when all the impressions of past actions are experienced and destroyed, when the body drops, and the individual enters the Absolute, as a river enters the ocean. This 'entering the ocean' is, of course, an analogy from the human standpoint, for, really, there was never a river, never is, and never will be. There was, is and will be only the ocean, and the ocean has to know that it is. Only the Absolute can be, and is, and Liberation is the consciousness of the Absolute. Yoga and *jnana* aim at this Supreme Beatitude.